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"MY NOVEL"

Lately Published,

THE CAXTONS;

A FAMILY PICTURE.

BY

SIR E. BULWER LYTTON, BART.

AUTHOR OF "MY NOVEL," ETC.

In 3 vols. post octavo, price £1, 11s. 6d.

"MY NOVEL"

By Pisistratus Caxton;

OR

VARIETIES IN ENGLISH LIFE

"Neque enim notare singulos mens est mihi,
Verum ipsam vitam et mores hominum ostendere."
PHÆDRUS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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MY NOVEL

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BOOK FIFTH

MY NOVEL.

BOOK V.—INITIAL CHAPTER.

CONTAINING MR CAXTON'S UNAVAILING CAUTION NOT TO BE DULL.

"I HOPE, Pisistratus," said my father, "that you do not intend to be dull?"

"Heaven forbid, sir! What could make you ask such a question? *Intend!* No! if I am dull it is from innocence."

"A very long discourse upon Knowledge!" said my father; "very long. I should cut it out!"

I looked upon my father as a Byzantian sage might have looked on a Vandal. "Cut it out!"—

"Stops the action, sir!" said my father, dogmatically.

"Action! But a novel is not a drama."

"No, it is a great deal longer—twenty times as long, I dare say," replied Mr Caxton with a sigh.

"Well, sir—well! I think my Discourse upon Knowledge has much to do with the subject—is vitally essential to the subject; does not stop the action—only explains and elucidates the action. And I am astonished, sir, that you, a scholar, and a cultivator of knowledge"—

"There—there!" cried my father, deprecatingly. "I yield—I yield. What better could I expect when I set up for a critic! What author ever lived that did not fly into a passion,

even with his own father, if his father presumed to say—'Cut out!'"

Mrs Caxton.—"My dear Austin, I am sure Pisistratus did not mean to offend you, and I have no doubt he will take your"—

Pisistratus, (hastily.)—"Advice *for the future*, certainly. I will quicken the action, and"—

"Go on with the Novel," whispered Roland, looking up from his eternal account-book. "We have lost £200 by our barley!"

Therewith I plunged my pen into the ink, and my thoughts into the "Fair Shadowland."

CHAPTER II.

"HALT!" cried a voice; and not a little surprised was Leonard when the stranger who had accosted him the preceding evening got into the chaise.

"Well," said Richard, "I am not the sort of man you expected, eh? Take time to recover yourself." And with these words Richard drew forth a book from his pocket, threw himself back, and began to read. Leonard stole many a glance at the acute, hardy, handsome face of his companion, and gradually recognised a family likeness to poor John, in whom, despite age and infirmity, the traces of no common share of physical beauty were still evident. And, with that quick link in ideas which mathematical aptitude bestows, the young student at once conjectured that he saw before him his uncle Richard. He had the discretion, however, to leave that gentleman free to choose his own time for introducing himself, and silently revolved the new thoughts produced by the novelty of his situation. Mr Richard read with notable quickness—sometimes cutting the leaves of the book with his penknife, sometimes tearing them open with his forefinger, sometimes skipping whole pages altogether. Thus he galloped to the end of the volume—flung it aside—lighted his cigar, and began to talk.

He put many questions to Leonard relative to his rearing, and especially to the mode by which he had acquired his education; and Leonard, confirmed in the idea that he was replying to a kinsman, answered frankly.

Richard did not think it strange that Leonard should have acquired so much instruction with so little direct tuition. Richard Avenel himself had been tutor to himself. He had

lived too long with our go-ahead brethren, who stride the world on the other side the Atlantic with the seven-leagued boots of the Giant-killer, not to have caught their glorious fever for reading. But it was for a reading wholly different from that which was familiar to Leonard. The books he read must be new; to read old books would have seemed to him going back in the world. He fancied that new books necessarily contained new ideas—a common mistake—and our lucky adventurer was the man of his day.

Tired with talking, he at length chucked the book he had run through to Leonard, and, taking out a pocket-book and pencil, amused himself with calculations on some detail of his business, after which he fell into an absorbed train of thought—part pecuniary, part ambitious.

Leonard found the book interesting: it was one of the numerous works, half-statistic, half-declamatory, relating to the condition of the working classes, which peculiarly distinguish our century, and ought to bind together rich and poor, by proving the grave attention which modern society bestows upon all that can affect the welfare of the last.

"Dull stuff—theory—claptrap," said Richard, rousing himself from his reverie at last: "it can't interest you."

"All books interest me, I think," said Leonard, "and this especially; for it relates to the working class, and I am one of them."

"You were yesterday, but you mayn't be to-morrow," answered Richard, good-humouredly, and patting him on the shoulder. "You see, my lad, that it is the middle class which ought to govern the country. What the book says about the ignorance of country magistrates is very good; but the man writes pretty considerable trash when he wants to regulate the number of hours a free-born boy should work at a factory—only ten hours a-day—pooh! and so lose two hours to the nation! Labour is wealth; and if we could get men to work twenty-four hours a-day, we should be just twice as rich. If the march of civilisation is to proceed," continued Richard, loftily, "men, and boys too, must not lie a-bed doing nothing *all night*, sir." Then with a complacent tone—"We shall get to the twenty-four hours

at last; and, by gad, we must, or we shan't flog the Europeans as we do now."

On arriving at the inn at which Richard had first made acquaintance with Mr Dale, the coach by which he had intended to perform the rest of the journey was found to be full. Richard continued to perform the journey in post-chaises, not without some grumbling at the expense, and incessant orders to the postboys to make the best of the way. "Slow country this, in spite of all its brag," said he—"very slow. Time is money—they know that in the States; for why, they are all men of business there. Always slow in a country where a parcel of lazy idle lords, and dukes, and baronets, seem to think 'time is pleasure.'"

Towards evening the chaise approached the confines of a very large town, and Richard began to grow fidgety. His easy cavalier air was abandoned. He withdrew his legs from the window, out of which they had been luxuriously dangling; pulled down his waistcoat; buckled more tightly his stock: it was clear that he was resuming the decorous dignity that belongs to state. He was like a monarch who, after travelling happy and incognito, returns to his capital. Leonard divined at once that they were nearing their journey's end.

Humble foot-passengers now looked at the chaise, and touched their hats. Richard returned the salutation with a nod—a nod less gracious than condescending. The chaise turned rapidly to the left, and stopped before a smart lodge, very new, very white, adorned with two Doric columns in stucco, and flanked by a large pair of gates. "Hollo!" cried the postboy, and cracked his whip.

Two children were playing before the lodge, and some clothes were hanging out to dry on the shrubs and pales round the neat little building.

"Hang those brats! they are actually playing," growled Dick. "As I live, the jade has been washing again! Stop, boy." During this soliloquy, a good-looking young woman had rushed from the door—slapped the children as, catching sight of the chaise, they ran towards the house—opened the gates, and, dropping a curtsey to the ground, seemed to wish

that she could drop into it altogether, so frightened and so trembling seemed she to shrink from the wrathful face which the master now put out of the window.

"Did I tell you, or did I not," said Dick, "that I would not have those horrid disreputable cubs of yours playing just before my lodge gates?"

"Please, sir—"

"Don't answer me. And did I tell you, or did I not, that the next time I saw you making a drying-ground of my lilacs, you should go out, neck and crop—"

"Oh, please sir—"

"You leave my lodge next Saturday: drive on, boy. The ingratitude and insolence of those common people are disgraceful to human nature," muttered Richard, with an accent of the bitterest misanthropy.

The chaise wheeled along the smoothest and freshest of gravel roads, and through fields of the finest land, in the highest state of cultivation. Rapid as was Leonard's survey, his rural eye detected the signs of a master in the art agronomial. Hitherto he had considered the Squire's model farm as the nearest approach to good husbandry he had seen; for Jackeymo's finer skill was developed rather on the minute scale of market-gardening than what can fairly be called husbandry. But the Squire's farm was degraded by many old-fashioned notions, and concessions to the whim of the eye, which would not be found in model farms now-a-days — large tangled hedgerows, which, though they constitute one of the beauties most picturesque in old England, make sad deductions from produce; great trees, overshadowing the corn, and harbouring the birds; little patches of rough sward left to waste; and angles of woodland running into fields, exposing them to rabbits, and blocking out the sun. These and such-like blots on a gentleman farmer's agriculture, common-sense and Giacomo had made clear to the acute comprehension of Leonard. No such faults were perceptible in Richard Avenel's domain. The fields lay in broad divisions, the hedges were clipped and narrowed into their proper destination of mere boundaries. Not a blade of wheat withered under the cold shade of a tree; not a yard of land lay

waste; not a weed was to be seen, not a thistle to waft its baleful seed through the air: some young plantations were placed, not where the artist would put them, but just where the farmer wanted a fence from the wind. Was there no beauty in this? Yes, there was beauty of its kind—beauty at once recognisable to the initiated—beauty of use and profit—beauty that could bear a monstrous high rent. And Leonard uttered a cry of admiration which thrilled through the heart of Richard Avenel.

"This *is* farming!" said the villager.

"Well, I guess it is," answered Richard, all his ill-humour vanishing. "You should have seen the land when I bought it. But we new men, as they call us—(damn their impertinence)—are the new blood of this country."

Richard Avenel never said anything more true. Long may the new blood circulate through the veins of the mighty giantess; but let the grand heart be the same as it has beat for proud ages.

The chaise now passed through a pretty shrubbery, and the house came into gradual view—a house with a portico—all the offices carefully thrust out of sight.

The postboy dismounted, and rang the bell.

"I almost think they are going to keep me waiting," said Mr Richard, well-nigh in the very words of Louis XIV.

But that fear was not realised—the door opened; a well-fed servant out of livery presented himself. There was no hearty welcoming smile on his face, but he opened the chaise-door with demure and taciturn respect.

"Where's George? why does not he come to the door?" asked Richard, descending from the chaise slowly, and leaning on the servant's outstretched arm with as much precaution as if he had had the gout.

Fortunately, George here came into sight, settling himself hastily into his livery coat.

"See to the things, both of you," said Richard, as he paid the postboy.

Leonard stood on the gravel sweep, gazing at the square white house.

"Handsome elevation — classical, I take it — eh?" said Richard, joining him. "But you should see the offices."

He then, with familiar kindness, took Leonard by the arm, and drew him within. He showed him the hall, with a carved mahogany stand for hats; he showed him the drawing-room, and pointed out all its beauties—though it was summer the drawing-room looked cold, as will look rooms newly furnished, with walls newly papered, in houses newly built. The furniture was handsome, and suited to the rank of a rich trader. There was no pretence about it, and therefore no vulgarity, which is more than can be said for the houses of many an honourable Mrs Somebody in Mayfair, with rooms twelve feet square, chokeful of buhl, that would have had its proper place in the Tuileries. Then Richard showed him the library, with mahogany bookcases and plate glass, and the fashionable authors handsomely bound. Your new men are much better friends to living authors than your old families who live in the country, and at most subscribe to a book-club. Then Richard took him up-stairs, and led him through the bedrooms—all very clean and comfortable, and with every modern convenience; and, pausing in a very pretty single gentleman's chamber, said, "This is your den. And now, can you guess who I am?"

"No one but my uncle Richard could be so kind," answered Leonard.

But the compliment did not flatter Richard. He was extremely disconcerted and disappointed. He had hoped that he should be taken for a lord at least, forgetful of all that he had said in disparagement of lords.

"Pish!" said he at last, biting his lip—"so you don't think that I look like a gentleman? Come, now, speak honestly."

Leonard wonderingly saw he had given pain, and, with the good breeding which comes instinctively from good-nature, replied—"I judged you by your heart, sir, and your likeness to my grandfather—otherwise I should never have presumed to fancy we could be relations."

"Hum!" answered Richard. "You can just wash your hands, and then come down to dinner; you will hear the gong in ten minutes. There's the bell—ring for what you want."

With that, he turned on his heel; and, descending the stairs, gave a look into the dining-room, and admired the plated salver

on the sideboard, and the king's pattern spoons and forks on the table. Then he walked to the looking-glass over the mantelpiece; and, wishing to survey the whole effect of his form, mounted a chair. He was just getting into an attitude which he thought imposing, when the butler entered, and, being London bred, had the discretion to try to escape unseen; but Richard caught sight of him in the looking-glass, and coloured up to the temples.

"Jarvis," said he mildly—"Jarvis, put me in mind to have these inexpressibles altered."

CHAPTER III.

Apropos of the inexpressibles, Mr Richard did not forget to provide his nephew with a much larger wardrobe than could have been thrust into Dr Riccabocca's knapsack. There was a very good tailor in the town, and the clothes were very well made. And, but for an air more ingenuous, and a cheek that, despite study and night vigils, retained much of the sunburnt bloom of the rustic, Leonard Fairfield might now have almost passed, without disparaging comment, by the bow-window at White's. Richard burst into an immoderate fit of laughter when he first saw the watch which the poor Italian had bestowed upon Leonard; but, to atone for the laughter, he made him a present of a very pretty substitute, and bade him "lock up his turnip." Leonard was more hurt by the jeer at his old patron's gift than pleased by his uncle's. But Richard Avenel had no conception of sentiment. It was not for many days that Leonard could reconcile himself to his uncle's manner. Not that the peasant could pretend to judge of its mere conventional defects; but there is an ill-breeding to which, whatever our rank and nurture, we are almost equally sensitive—the ill-breeding that comes from want of consideration for others. Now, the Squire was as homely in his way as Richard Avenel, but the Squire's bluntness rarely hurt the feelings; and when it did so, the Squire perceived and hastened to repair his blunder. But Mr Richard, whether kind or cross, was always wounding you in some little delicate fibre—not from malice, but from the absence of any little delicate fibres of his own. He was really, in many respects, a most excellent man, and certainly a very valuable citizen. But his merits wanted the

fine tints and fluent curves that constitute beauty of character. He was honest, but sharp in his practice, and with a keen eye to his interests. He was just, but as a matter of business. He made no allowances, and did not leave to his justice the large margin of tenderness and mercy. He was generous, but rather from an idea of what was due to himself than with much thought of the pleasure he gave to others; and he even regarded generosity as a capital put out to interest. He expected a great deal of gratitude in return, and, when he obliged a man, considered that he had bought a slave. Every needy voter knew where to come, if he wanted relief or a loan; but woe to him if he had ventured to express hesitation when Mr Avenel told him how he must vote.

In this town Richard had settled after his return from America, in which country he had enriched himself—first, by spirit and industry—lastly, by bold speculation and good luck. He invested his fortune in business—became a partner in a large brewery—soon bought out his associates—and then took a principal share in a flourishing corn-mill. He prospered rapidly—bought a property of some two or three hundred acres, built a house, and resolved to enjoy himself, and make a figure. He had now become the leading man of the town, and the boast to Audley Egerton that he could return one of the members, perhaps both, was by no means an exaggerated estimate of his power. Nor was his proposition, according to his own views, so unprincipled as it appeared to the statesman. He had taken a great dislike to both the sitting members—a dislike natural to a sensible man of moderate politics, who had something to lose. For Mr Slappe, the active member—who was head-over-ears in debt—was one of the furious democrats rare before the Reform Bill—and whose opinions were held dangerous even by the mass of a Liberal constituency; while Mr Sleekie, the gentleman member, who laid by £5000 every year from his dividends in the Funds, was one of those men whom Richard justly pronounced to be "humbugs"—men who curry favour with the extreme party by voting for measures sure not to be carried; while, if there were the least probability of coming to a decision that would lower the money market,

Mr Sleekie was seized with a well-timed influenza. Those politicians are common enough now. Propose to march to the Millennium, and they are your men. Ask them to march a quarter of a mile, and they fall to feeling their pockets, and trembling for fear of the footpads. They are never so joyful as when there is no chance of a victory. Did they beat the Minister, they would be carried out of the House in a fit.

Richard Avenel—despising both these gentlemen, and not taking kindly to the Whigs since the great Whig leaders were Lords—had looked with a friendly eye to the Government as it then existed, and especially to Audley Egerton, the enlightened representative of commerce. But in giving Audley and his colleagues the benefit of his influence, through conscience, he thought it all fair and right to have a *quid pro quo*, and, as he had so frankly confessed, it was his whim to rise up "Sir Richard." For this worthy citizen abused the aristocracy much on the same principle as the fair Olivia depreciated Squire Thornhill—he had a sneaking affection for what he abused. The society of Screwstown was, like most provincial capitals, composed of two classes—the commercial and the exclusive. These last dwelt chiefly apart, around the ruins of an old abbey; they affected its antiquity in their pedigrees, and had much of its ruin in their finances. Widows of rural thanes in the neighbourhood—genteel spinsters—officers retired on half-pay—younger sons of rich squires, who had now become old bachelors—in short, a very respectable, proud, aristocratic set—who thought more of themselves than do all the Gowers and Howards, Courtenays and Seymours, put together. It had early been the ambition of Richard Avenel to be admitted into this sublime coterie; and, strange to say, he had partially succeeded. He was never more happy than when he was asked to their card-parties, and never more unhappy than when he was actually there. Various circumstances combined to raise Mr Avenel into this elevated society. First, he was unmarried, still very handsome, and in that society there was a large proportion of unwedded females. Secondly, he was the only rich trader in Screwstown who kept a good cook, and professed to give dinners, and the half-pay captains and colonels swallowed

the host for the sake of the venison. Thirdly, and principally, all these exclusives abhorred the two sitting members, and "*idem nolle idem velle de republicâ, ea firma amicitia est;*" that is, congeniality in politics pieces porcelain and crockery together better than the best diamond cement. The sturdy Richard Avenel—who valued himself on American independence—held these ladies and gentlemen in an awe that was truly Brahminical. Whether it was that, in England, all notions, even of liberty, are mixed up historically, traditionally, socially, with that fine and subtle element of aristocracy which, like the press, is the air we breathe; or whether Richard imagined that he really became magnetically imbued with the virtues of these silver pennies and gold seven-shilling pieces, distinct from the vulgar coinage in popular use, it is hard to say. But the truth must be told—Richard Avenel was a notable tuft-hunter. He had a great longing to marry out of this society; but he had not yet seen any one sufficiently high-born and high-bred to satisfy his aspirations. In the meanwhile, he had convinced himself that his way would be smooth could he offer to make his ultimate choice "My Lady;" and he felt that it would be a proud hour in his life when he could walk before stiff Colonel Pompley to the sound of "Sir Richard." Still, however disappointed at the ill success of his bluff diplomacy with Mr Egerton, and however yet cherishing the most vindictive resentment against that individual—he did not, as many would have done, throw up his political convictions out of personal spite. He reserved his private grudge for some special occasion, and continued still to support the Administration, and to hate one of the Ministers.

But, duly to appreciate the value of Richard Avenel, and in just counterpoise to all his foibles, one ought to have seen what he had effected for the town. Well might he boast of "new blood;" he had done as much for the town as he had for his fields. His energy, his quick comprehension of public utility, backed by his wealth, and bold, bullying, imperious character, had sped the work of civilisation as if with the celerity and force of a steam-engine.

If the town were so well paved and so well lighted—if half-a-

dozen squalid lanes had been transformed into a stately street—if half the town no longer depended on tanks for their water—if the poor-rates were reduced one-third,—praise to the brisk new blood which Richard Avenel had infused into vestry and corporation. And his example itself was so contagious! "There was not a plate-glass window in the town when I came into it," said Richard Avenel; "and now look down the High Street!" He took the credit to himself, and justly; for, though his own business did not require windows of plate-glass, he had wakened the spirit of enterprise which adorns a whole city.

Mr Avenel did not present Leonard to his friends for more than a fortnight. He allowed him to wear off his rust. He then gave a grand dinner, at which his nephew was formally introduced, and, to his great wrath and disappointment, never opened his lips. How could he, poor youth, when Miss Clarina Mowbray only talked upon high life; till proud Colonel Pompley went in state through the history of the Siege of Seringapatam?

CHAPTER IV.

While Leonard accustoms himself gradually to the splendours that surround him, and often turns with a sigh to the remembrance of his mother's cottage and the sparkling fount in the Italian's flowery garden, we will make with thee, O reader, a rapid flight to the metropolis, and drop ourselves amidst the gay groups that loiter along the dusty ground, or loll over the road-side palings of Hyde Park. The season is still at its height; but the short day of fashionable London life, which commences two hours after noon, is in its decline. The crowd in Rotten Row begins to thin. Near the statue of Achilles, and apart from all other loungers, a gentleman, with one hand thrust into his waistcoat, and the other resting on his cane, gazed listlessly on the horsemen and carriages in the brilliant ring. He was still in the prime of life, at the age when man is usually the most social—when the acquaintances of youth have ripened into friendship, and a personage of some rank and fortune has become a well-known feature in the mobile face of society. But though, when his contemporaries were boys scarce at college, this gentleman had blazed foremost amongst the princes of fashion, and though he had all the qualities of nature and circumstance which either retain fashion to the last, or exchange its false celebrity for a graver repute, he stood as a stranger in that throng of his countrymen. Beauties whirled by to the toilet—statesmen passed on to the senate—dandies took flight to the clubs; and neither nods nor becks, nor wreathed smiles, said to the solitary spectator, "Follow us—thou art one of our set." Now and then, some middle-aged beau, nearing the post of the

loiterer, turned round to look again; but the second glance seemed to dissipate the recognition of the first, and the beau silently continued his way.

"By the tombs of my fathers!" said the solitary to himself, "I know now what a dead man might feel if he came to life again, and took a peep at the living."

Time passed on—the evening shades descended fast. Our stranger in London had well-nigh the Park to himself. He seemed to breathe more freely as he saw that the space was so clear.

"There's oxygen in the atmosphere now," said he, half aloud; "and I can walk without breathing in the gaseous fumes of the multitude. O those chemists—what dolts they are! They tell us that crowds taint the air, but they never guess why! Pah, it is not the lungs that poison the element—it is the reek of bad hearts. When a periwig-pated fellow breathes on me, I swallow a mouthful of care. *Allons!* my friend Nero; now for a stroll." He touched with his cane a large Newfoundland dog, who lay stretched near his feet; and dog and man went slow through the growing twilight, and over the brown dry turf. At length our solitary paused, and threw himself on a bench under a tree. "Half-past eight!" said he, looking at his watch—"one may smoke one's cigar without shocking the world."

He took out his cigar-case, struck a light, and in another moment reclined at length on the bench—seemed absorbed in regarding the smoke, that scarce coloured ere it vanished into air.

"It is the most barefaced lie in the world, my Nero," said he, addressing his dog, "this boasted liberty of man! Now here am I, a freeborn Englishman, a citizen of the world, caring—I often say to myself—caring not a jot for Kaisar or Mob; and yet I no more dare smoke this cigar in the Park at half-past six, when all the world is abroad, than I dare pick my Lord Chancellor's pocket, or hit the Archbishop of Canterbury a thump on the nose. Yet no law in England forbids me my cigar, Nero! What is law at half-past eight, was not crime at six and a half! Britannia says, 'Man, thou art free,' and she lies like a commonplace woman. O Nero, Nero! you enviable dog!—you serve but from liking. No thought of the world costs you one wag of

the tail. Your big heart and true instinct suffice you for reason and law. You would want nothing to your felicity, if in these moments of ennui you would but smoke a cigar. Try it, Nero! —try it!" And, rising from his incumbent posture, he sought to force the end of the weed between the teeth of the dog.

While thus gravely engaged, two figures had approached the place. The one was a man who seemed weak and sickly. His threadbare coat was buttoned to the chin, but hung large on his shrunken breast. The other was a girl, who might be from twelve to fourteen, on whose arm he leant heavily. Her cheek was wan, and there was a patient sad look on her face, which seemed so settled that you would think she could never have known the mirthfulness of childhood.

"Pray rest here, papa," said the child softly; and she pointed to the bench, without taking heed of its preoccupant, who now, indeed, confined to one corner of the seat, was almost hidden by the shadow of the tree.

The man sate down, with a feeble sigh; and then, observing the stranger, raised his hat, and said, in that tone of voice which betrays the usages of polished society, "Forgive me, if I intrude on you, sir."

The stranger looked up from his dog, and seeing that the girl was standing, rose at once as if to make room for her on the bench.

But still the girl did not heed him. She hung over her father, and wiped his brow tenderly with a little kerchief which she took from her own neck for the purpose.

Nero, delighted to escape the cigar, had taken to some unwieldy curvets and gambols, to vent the excitement into which he had been thrown; and now returning, approached the bench with a low look of surprise, and sniffed at the intruders of her master's privacy.

"Come here, sir," said the master. "You need not fear him," he added, addressing himself to the girl.

But the girl, without turning round to him, cried in a voice rather of anguish than alarm, "He has fainted! Father! father!"

The stranger kicked aside his dog, which was in the way, and

loosened the poor man's stiff military stock. While thus charitably engaged, the moon broke out, and the light fell full on the pale care-worn face of the unconscious sufferer.

"This face seems not unfamiliar to me, though sadly changed," said the stranger to himself; and bending towards the girl, who had sunk on her knees, and was chafing her father's hands, he asked, "My child, what is your father's name?"

The child continued her task, too absorbed to answer.

The stranger put his hand on her shoulder, and repeated the question.

"Digby," answered the child, almost unconsciously; and as she spoke the man's senses began to return. In a few minutes more he had sufficiently recovered to falter forth his thanks to the stranger. But the last took his hand, and said, in a voice at once tremulous and soothing, "Is it possible that I see once more an old brother in arms? Algernon Digby, I do not forget you; but it seems England has forgotten."

A hectic flush spread over the soldier's face, and he looked away from the speaker as he answered—

"My name is Digby, it is true, sir; but I do not think we have met before. Come, Helen, I am well now—we will go home."

"Try and play with that great dog, my child," said the stranger—"I want to talk with your father."

The child bowed her submissive head, and moved away; but she did not play with the dog.

"I must reintroduce myself, formally, I see," quoth the stranger. "You were in the same regiment with myself, and my name is L'Estrange."

"My lord," said the soldier, rising, "forgive me that—"

"I don't think that it was the fashion to call me 'my lord' at the mess-table. Come, what has happened to you?—on half-pay?"

Mr Digby shook his head mournfully.

"Digby, old fellow, can you lend me £100?" said Lord L'Estrange, clapping his *ci-devant* brother officer on the shoulder, and in a tone of voice that seemed like a boy's—so impudent was it, and devil-me-carish. "No! Well, that's lucky, for I can lend it to you."

Mr Digby burst into tears.

Lord L'Estrange did not seem to observe the emotion, but went on carelessly—

"Perhaps you don't know that, besides being heir to a father who is not only very rich but very liberal, I inherited, on coming of age, from a maternal relation, a fortune so large that it would bore me to death if I were obliged to live up to it. But in the days of our old acquaintance I fear we were both sad extravagant fellows, and I dare say I borrowed of you pretty freely."

"Me! Oh, Lord L'Estrange!"

"You have married since then, and reformed, I suppose. Tell me, old friend, all about it."

Mr Digby, who by this time had succeeded in restoring some calm to his shattered nerves, now rose, and said in brief sentences, but clear firm tones,—

"My Lord, it is idle to talk of me—useless to help me. I am fast dying. But, my child there, my only child, (he paused an instant, and went on rapidly.) I have relations in a distant county, if I could but get to them—I think they would at least provide for her. This has been for weeks my hope, my dream, my prayer. I cannot afford the journey except by your help. I have begged without shame for myself; shall I be ashamed, then, to beg for her?"

"Digby," said L'Estrange, with some grave alteration of manner, "talk neither of dying, nor begging. You were nearer death when the balls whistled round you at Waterloo. If soldier meets soldier and says, 'Friend, thy purse,' it is not begging, but brotherhood. Ashamed! By the soul of Belisarius! if I needed money, I would stand at a crossing with my Waterloo medal over my breast, and say to each sleek citizen I had helped to save from the sword of the Frenchman, 'It is your shame if I starve.' Now, lean upon me; I see you should be at home—which way?"

The poor soldier pointed his hand towards Oxford Street, and reluctantly accepted the proffered arm.

"And when you return from your relations, you will call on me? What!—hesitate? Come, promise."

"I will."

"On your honour."

"If I live, on my honour."

"I am staying at present at Knightsbridge, with my father; but you will always hear of my address at No. — Grosvenor Square, Mr Egerton's. So you have a long journey before you?"

"Very long."

"Do not fatigue yourself—travel slowly. Ho, you foolish child!—I see you are jealous of me. Your father has another arm to spare you."

Thus talking, and getting but short answers, Lord L'Estrange continued to exhibit those whimsical peculiarities of character, which had obtained for him the repute of heartlessness in the world. Perhaps the reader may think the world was not in the right. But if ever the world does judge rightly of the character of a man who does not live for the world, nor talk for the world, nor feel with the world, it will be centuries after the soul of Harley L'Estrange has done with this planet.

CHAPTER V.

Lord L'Estrange parted company with Mr Digby at the entrance of Oxford Street. The father and child there took a cabriolet. Mr Digby directed the driver to go down the Edgeware Road. He refused to tell L'Estrange his address, and this with such evident pain, from the sores of pride, that L'Estrange could not press the point. Reminding the soldier of his promise to call, Harley thrust a pocket-book into his hand, and walked off hastily towards Grosvenor Square.

He reached Audley Egerton's door just as that gentleman was getting out of his carriage; and the two friends entered the house together.

"Does the nation take a nap to-night?" asked L'Estrange. "Poor old lady! She bears so much of her affairs, that she may well boast of her constitution: it must be of iron."

"The House is still sitting," answered Audley, seriously, and with small heed of his friend's witticism. "But it is not a Government motion, and the division will be late, so I came home; and if I had not found you here, I should have gone into the Park to look for you."

"Yes—one always knows where to find me at this hour, 9 o'clock P.M.—cigar—Hyde Park. There is not a man in England so regular in his habits."

Here the friends reached a drawing-room in which the Member of Parliament seldom sat, for his private apartments were all on the ground-floor.

"But it is the strangest whim of yours, Harley," said he.

"What?"

"To affect detestation of ground-floors."

"Affect! O sophisticated man, of the earth, earthy! Affect! —nothing less natural to the human soul than a ground-floor. We are quite far enough from heaven, mount as many stairs as we will, without grovelling by preference."

"According to that symbolical view of the case," said Audley, "you should lodge in an attic."

"So I would, but that I abhor new slippers. As for hair-brushes, I am indifferent."

"What have slippers and hair-brushes to do with attics?"

"Try! Make your bed in an attic, and the next morning you will have neither slippers nor hair-brushes!"

"What shall I have done with them?"

"Shied them at the cats!"

"What odd things you do say, Harley!"

"Odd! By Apollo and his nine spinsters! there is no human being who has so little imagination as a distinguished member of Parliament. Answer me this, thou solemn Right Honourable,—Hast thou climbed to the heights of august contemplation? Hast thou gazed on the stars with the rapt eye of song? Hast thou dreamed of a love known to the angels, or sought to seize in the Infinite the mystery of life?"

"Not I indeed, my poor Harley."

"Then no wonder, poor Audley, that you cannot conjecture why he who makes his bed in an attic, disturbed by base catterwauls, shies his slippers at cats. Bring a chair into the balcony. Nero spoiled my cigar to-night. I am going to smoke now. You never smoke. You can look on the shrubs in the Square."

Audley slightly shrugged his shoulders, but he followed his friend's counsel and example, and brought his chair into the balcony. Nero came too, but at sight and smell of the cigar prudently retreated, and took refuge under the table.

"Audley Egerton, I want something from Government."

"I am delighted to hear it."

"There was a cornet in my regiment, who would have done better not to have come into it. We were, for the most part of us, puppies and fops."

"You all fought well, however."

"Puppies and fops do fight well. Vanity and valour gene-

rally go together. Cæsar, who scratched his head with due care of his scanty curls, and, even in dying, thought of the folds in his toga; Walter Raleigh, who could not walk twenty yards, because of the gems in his shoes; Alcibiades, who lounged into the Agora with doves in his bosom, and an apple in his hand; Murat, bedizened in gold-lace and furs; and Demetrius, the City-Taker, who made himself up like a French *Marquise*,—were all pretty good fellows at fighting. A slovenly hero like Cromwell is a paradox in nature, and a marvel in history. But to return to my cornet. We were rich; he was poor. When the pot of clay swims down the stream with the brass-pots, it is sure of a smash. Men said Digby was stingy; I saw he was extravagant. But every one, I fear, would be rather thought stingy than poor. *Bref.*—I left the army, and saw him no more till to-night. There was never shabby poor gentleman on the stage more awfully shabby, more pathetically gentleman. But, look ye, this man has fought for England. It was no child's play at Waterloo, let me tell you, Mr Egerton; and, but for such men, you would be at best a *sous-prefet*, and your Parliament a Provincial Assembly. You must do something for Digby. What shall it be?"

"Why, really, my dear Harley, this man was no great friend of yours—eh?"

"If he were, he would not want the Government to help him—he would not be ashamed of taking money from me."

"That is all very fine, Harley; but there are so many poor officers, and so little to give. It is the most difficult thing in the world that which you ask me. Indeed, I know nothing can be done: he has his half-pay?"

"I think not; or, if he has it, no doubt it all goes on his debts. That's nothing to us: the man and his child are starving."

"But if it is his own fault—if he has been imprudent?"

"Ah—well, well; where the devil is Nero?"

"I am so sorry I can't oblige you. If it were anything else—"

"There is something else. My valet—I can't turn him adrift—excellent fellow, but gets drunk now and then. Will you find him a place in the Stamp Office?"

"With pleasure."

"No, now I think of it—the man knows my ways: I must keep him. But my old wine-merchant—civil man, never dunned—is a bankrupt. I am under great obligations to him, and he has a very pretty daughter. Do you think you could thrust him into some small place in the Colonies, or make him a King's Messenger, or something of the sort?"

"If you very much wish it, no doubt I can."

"My dear Audley, I am but feeling my way: the fact is, I want something for myself."

"Ah, that indeed gives me pleasure!" cried Egerton, with animation.

"The mission to Florence will soon be vacant—I know it privately. The place would quite suit me. Pleasant city; the best figs in Italy—very little to do. You could sound Lord —— on the subject."

"I will answer beforehand. Lord —— would be enchanted to secure to the public service a man so accomplished as yourself, and the son of a peer like Lord Lansmere."

Harley L'Estrange sprang to his feet, and flung his cigar in the face of a stately policeman who was looking up at the balcony.

"Infamous and bloodless official!" cried Harley L'Estrange; "so you could provide for a pimple-nosed lackey—for a wine-merchant who has been poisoning the king's subjects with white-lead or sloe-juice—for an idle sybarite, who would complain of a crumpled rose-leaf; and nothing, in all the vast patronage of England, for a broken-down soldier, whose dauntless breast was her rampart!"

"Harley," said the Member of Parliament, with his calm sensible smile, "this would be a very good claptrap at a small theatre; but there is nothing in which Parliament demands such rigid economy as the military branch of the public service; and no man for whom it is so hard to effect what we must plainly call a job as a subaltern officer, who has done nothing more than his duty—and all military men do that. Still, as you take it so earnestly, I will use what interest I can at the War Office, and get him, perhaps, the mastership of a barrack."

"You had better; for, if you do not, I swear I will turn Radical, and come down to your own city to oppose you, with Hunt and Cobbett to canvass for me."

"I should be very glad to see you come into Parliament, even as a Radical, and at my expense," said Audley, with great kindness. "But the air is growing cold, and you are not accustomed to our climate. Nay, if you are too poetic for catarrhs and rheums, I'm not—come in."

CHAPTER VI.

Lord L'Estrange threw himself on a sofa, and leant his cheek on his hand thoughtfully. Audley Egerton sate near him, with his arms folded, and gazed on his friend's face with a soft expression of aspect, which was very unusual to the firm outline of his handsome features. The two men were as dissimilar in person as the reader will have divined that they were in character. All about Egerton was so rigid, all about L'Estrange so easy. In every posture of Harley's there was the unconscious grace of a child. The very fashion of his garments showed his abhorrence of restraint. His clothes were wide and loose; his neckcloth, tied carelessly, left his throat half bare. You could see that he had lived much in warm and southern lands, and contracted a contempt for conventionalities; there was as little in his dress as in his talk of the formal precision of the north. He was three or four years younger than Audley, but he looked at least twelve years younger. In fact, he was one of those men to whom old age seems impossible—voice, look, figure, had all the charm of youth; and perhaps it was from this gracious youthfulness—at all events, it was characteristic of the kind of love he inspired—that neither his parents, nor the few friends admitted into his intimacy, ever called him, in their habitual intercourse, by the name of his title. He was not L'Estrange with them, he was Harley; and by that familiar baptismal I will usually designate him. He was not one of those men whom author or reader wish to view at a distance, and remember as "my Lord"—it was so rarely that he remembered it himself. For the rest, it had been said of him by a shrewd wit —"He is so natural that every one calls him affected." Harley

L'Estrange was not so critically handsome as Audley Egerton; to a commonplace observer he was only rather goodlooking than otherwise. But women said that he had "a beautiful countenance," and they were not wrong. He wore his hair, which was of a fair chestnut, long, and in loose curls; and instead of the Englishman's whiskers, indulged in the foreigner's moustache. His complexion was delicate, though not effeminate: it was rather the delicacy of a student, than of a woman. But in his clear grey eye there was wonderful vigour of life. A skilful physiologist, looking only into that eye, would have recognised rare stamina of constitution—a nature so rich that, while easily disturbed, it would require all the effects of time, or all the fell combinations of passion and grief, to exhaust it. Even now, though so thoughtful, and even so sad, the rays of that eye were as concentrated and steadfast as the light of the diamond.

"You were only, then, in jest," said Audley, after a long silence, "when you spoke of this mission to Florence. You have still no idea of entering into public life?"

"None."

"I had hoped better things when I got your promise to pass one season in London. But, indeed, you have kept your promise to the ear to break it to the spirit. I could not presuppose that you would shun all society, and be as much of a hermit here as under the vines of Como."

"I have sate in the Strangers' Gallery, and heard your great speakers; I have been in the pit of the opera, and seen your fine ladies; I have walked your streets, I have lounged in your parks, and I say that I can't fall in love with a faded dowager, because she fills up her wrinkles with rouge.

"Of what dowager do you speak?" asked the matter-of-fact Audley.

"She has a great many titles. Some people call her Fashion—you busy men, Politics: it is all one—tricked out and artificial. I mean London Life. No, I can't fall in love with her, fawning old harridan!"

"I wish you could fall in love with something."

"I wish I could, with all my heart."

"But you are so *blasé*."

"On the contrary, I am so fresh. Look out of the window—what do you see?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing—"

"Nothing but houses and dusty lilacs, my coachman dozing on his box, and two women in pattens crossing the kennel."

"I see not those where I lie on the sofa. I see but the stars. And I feel for them as I did when I was a schoolboy at Eton. It is you who are *blasé*, not I. Enough of this. You do not forget my commission, with respect to the exile who has married into your brother's family?"

"No; but here you set me a task more difficult than that of saddling your cornet on the War Office."

"I know it is difficult, for the counter influence is vigilant and strong; but, on the other hand, the enemy is so damnable a traitor that one must have the Fates and the household gods on one's side."

"Nevertheless," said the practical Audley, bending over a book on the table; "I think that the best plan would be to attempt a compromise with the traitor."

"To judge of others by myself," answered Harley with spirit, "it were less bitter to put up with wrong than to palter with it for compensation. And such wrong! Compromise with the open foe—that may be done with honour; but with the perjured friend—that were to forgive the perjury!"

"You are too vindictive," said Egerton; "there may be excuses for the friend, which palliate even"—

"Hush! Audley, hush! or I shall think the world has indeed corrupted you. Excuse for the friend who deceives, who betrays! No, such is the true outlaw of Humanity; and the Furies surround him even while he sleeps in the temple."

The man of the world lifted his eyes slowly on the animated face of one still natural enough for the passions. He then once more returned to his book, and said, after a pause, "It is time you should marry, Harley."

"No," answered L'Estrange, with a smile at this sudden turn in the conversation—"not time yet; for my chief objection to

that change in life is, that the women now-a-days are too old for me, or I am too young for them. A few, indeed, are so infantine that one is ashamed to be their toy; but most are so knowing that one is a fool to be their dupe. The first, if they condescend to love you, love you as the biggest doll they have yet dandled, and for a doll's good qualities—your pretty blue eyes, and your exquisite millinery. The last, if they prudently accept you, do so on algebraical principles; you are but the X or the Y that represents a certain aggregate of goods matrimonial—pedigree, title, rent-roll, diamonds, pin-money, opera-box. They cast you up with the help of mamma, and you wake some morning to find that *plus* wife *minus* affection equals—the Devil!"

"Nonsense," said Audley, with his quiet grave laugh. "I grant that it is often the misfortune of a man in your station to be married rather for what he has, than for what he is; but you are tolerably penetrating, and not likely to be deceived in the character of the woman you court."

"Of the woman I *court?*—No! But of the woman I *marry*, very likely indeed. Woman is a changeable thing, as our Virgil informed us at school; but her change *par excellence* is from the fairy you woo to the brownie you wed. It is not that she has been a hypocrite, it is that she is a transmigration. You marry a girl for her accomplishments. She paints charmingly, or plays like St Cecilia. Clap a ring on her finger, and she never draws again—except perhaps your caricature on the back of a letter, and never opens a piano after the honeymoon. You marry her for her sweet temper; and next year, her nerves are so shattered that you can't contradict her but you are whirled into a storm of hysterics. You marry her because she declares she hates balls and likes quiet; and ten to one but what she becomes a patroness at Almacks, or a lady-in-waiting."

"Yet most men marry, and most men survive the operation."

"If it were only necessary to live, that would be a consolatory and encouraging reflection. But to live with peace, to live with dignity, to live with freedom, to live in harmony with your thoughts, your habits, your aspirations—and this in the perpetual companionship of a person to whom you have

given the power to wound your peace, to assail your dignity, to cripple your freedom, to jar on each thought and each habit, and bring you down to the meanest details of earth, when you invite her, poor soul, to soar to the spheres—that makes the to be, or not to be, which is the question."

"If I were you, Harley, I would do as I have heard the author of *Sandford and Merton* did—choose out a child and educate her yourself after your own heart."

"You have hit it," answered Harley, seriously. "That has long been my idea—a very vague one, I confess. But I fear I shall be an old man before I find even the child.

"Ah!" he continued, yet more earnestly, while the whole character of his varying countenance changed again—"ah! if indeed I could discover what I seek—one who with the heart of a child has the mind of a woman; one who beholds in nature the variety, the charm, the never feverish, ever healthful excitement that others vainly seek in the bastard sentimentalities of a life false with artificial forms; one who can comprehend, as by intuition, the rich poetry with which creation is clothed—poetry so clear to the child when enraptured with the flower, or when wondering at the star! If on me such exquisite companionship were bestowed—why, then"— He paused, sighed deeply, and, covering his face with his hand, resumed, in faltering accents,—

"But once—but once only, did such vision of the Beautiful made Human rise before—rise amidst 'golden exhalations of the dawn.' It beggared my life in vanishing. You know only—you only—how—how"—

He bowed his head, and the tears forced themselves through his clenched fingers.

"So long ago!" said Audley, sharing his friend's emotion. "Years so long and so weary, yet still thus tenacious of a mere boyish memory."

"Away with it, then!" cried Harley, springing to his feet, and with a laugh of strange merriment. "Your carriage still waits: set me home before you go to the House."

Then laying his hand lightly on his friend's shoulder, he said, "Is it for you, Audley Egerton, to speak sneeringly of boyish

memories? What else is it that binds us together? What else warms my heart when I meet you? What else draws your thoughts from blue-books and beer-bills, to waste them on a vagrant like me? Shake hands. Oh, friend of my boyhood! recollect the oars that we plied and the bats that we wielded in the old time, or the murmured talk on the moss-grown bank, as we sate together, building in the summer air castles mightier than Windsor. Ah! they are strong ties, those boyish memories, believe me! I remember as if it were yesterday my translation of that lovely passage in Persius, beginning—let me see—ah!—

'Quum primum pavido custos mihi purpura cernet,'

that passage on friendship which gushes out so livingly from the stern heart of the satirist: And when old ——— complimented me on my verses, my eye sought yours. Verily, I now say as then,

'Nescio quod, certè est quod me tibi temperet astrum.'" *

Audley turned away his head as he returned the grasp of his friend's hand; and while Harley, with his light elastic footstep, descended the stairs, Egerton lingered behind, and there was no trace of the worldly man upon his countenance when he took his place in the carriage by his companion's side.

Two hours afterwards, weary cries of "Question, question!" "Divide, divide!" sunk into reluctant silence as Audley Egerton rose to conclude the debate—the man of men to speak late at night, and to impatient benches: a man who would be heard; whom a Bedlam broke loose would not have roared down; with a voice clear and sound as a bell, and a form as firmly set on the ground as a church-tower. And while, on the dullest of dull questions, Audley Egerton thus, not too lively himself, enforced attention, where was Harley L'Estrange? Standing alone by the river at Richmond, and murmuring low fantastic thoughts as he gazed on the moonlit tide.

* "What was the star I know not, but certainly some star it was that attuned me unto thee."

When Audley left him at home, he had joined his parents, made them gay with his careless gaiety, seen the old-fashioned folks retire to rest, and then—while they, perhaps, deemed him once more the hero of ball-rooms and the cynosure of clubs—he drove slowly through the soft summer night, amidst the perfumes of many a garden and many a gleaming chestnut grove, with no other aim before him than to reach the loveliest margin of England's loveliest river, at the hour when the moon was fullest and the song of the nightingale most sweet. And so eccentric a humourist was this man, that I believe, as he there loitered—no one near to cry "How affected!" or "How romantic!"—he enjoyed himself more than if he had been exchanging the politest "how-d'ye-do's" in the hottest of London drawing-rooms, or betting his hundreds on the odd trick with Lord De R—— for his partner.

CHAPTER VII.

Leonard had been about six weeks with his uncle, and those weeks were well spent. Mr Richard had taken him to his counting-house, and initiated him into business and the mysteries of double entry; and, in return for the young man's readiness and zeal in matters which the acute trader instinctively felt were not exactly to his tastes, Richard engaged the best master the town afforded to read with his nephew in the evening. This gentleman was the head usher of a large school —who had his hours to himself after eight o'clock—and was pleased to vary the dull routine of enforced lessons by instructions to a pupil who took delightedly—even to the Latin grammar. Leonard made rapid strides, and learned more in those six weeks than many a cleverish boy does in twice as many months. These hours which Leonard devoted to study Richard usually spent from home—sometimes at the houses of his grand acquaintances in the Abbey Gardens, sometimes in the Reading-Room appropriated to those aristocrats. If he stayed at home, it was in company with his head clerk, and for the purpose of checking his account-books, or looking over the names of doubtful electors.

Leonard had naturally wished to communicate his altered prospects to his old friends, that they in turn might rejoice his mother with such good tidings. But he had not been two days in the house before Richard had strictly forbidden all such correspondence.

"Look you," said he, "at present we are on an experiment—we must see if we like each other. Suppose we don't, you will only have raised expectations in your mother which must end

in bitter disappointment; and suppose we do, it will be time enough to write when something definite is settled."

"But my mother will be so anxious—"

"Make your mind easy on that score. I will write regularly to Mr Dale, and he can tell her that you are well and thriving. No more words, my man—when I say a thing, I say it." Then, observing that Leonard looked blank and dissatisfied, Richard added, with a good-humoured smile, "I have my reasons for all this—you shall know them later. And I tell you what,—if you do as I bid you, it is my intention to settle something handsome on your mother; but if you don't, devil a penny she'll get from me."

With that Richard turned on his heel, and in a few moments his voice was heard loud in objurgation with some of his people.

About the fourth week of Leonard's residence at Mr Avenel's, his host began to evince a certain change of manner. He was no longer quite so cordial with Leonard, nor did he take the same interest in his progress. About the same period he was frequently caught by the London butler before the looking-glass. He had always been a smart man in his dress, but he was now more particular. He would spoil three white cravats when he went out of an evening, before he could satisfy himself as to the tie. He also bought a "Peerage," and it became his favourite study at odd quarters of an hour. All these symptoms proceeded from a cause, and that cause was—Woman.

CHAPTER VIII.

The first people at Screwstown were indisputably the Pompleys. Colonel Pompley was grand, but Mrs Pompley was grander. The Colonel was stately in right of his military rank and his services in India; Mrs Pompley was majestic in right of her connections. Indeed, Colonel Pompley himself would have been crushed under the weight of the dignities which his lady heaped upon him, if he had not been enabled to prop his position with a "connection" of his own. He would never have held his own, nor been permitted to have an independent opinion on matters aristocratic, but for the well-sounding name of his relations, "the Digbies." Perhaps on the principle that obscurity increases the natural size of objects, and is an element of the Sublime, the Colonel did not too accurately define his relations "the Digbies:" he let it be casually understood that they were the Digbies to be found in Debrett. But if some indiscreet *Vulgarian* (a favourite word with both the Pompleys) asked point-blank if he meant "my Lord Digby," the Colonel, with a lofty air, answered—"The elder branch, sir." No one at Screwstown had ever seen these Digbies: they lay amidst the Far—the Recondite—even to the wife of Colonel Pompley's bosom. Now and then, when the Colonel referred to the lapse of years, and the uncertainty of human affections, he would say—"When young Digby and I were boys together," and then add with a sigh, "but we shall never meet again in this world. His family interest secured him a valuable appointment in a distant part of the British dominions." Mrs Pompley was always rather cowed by the Digbies. She could not be sceptical as to this connection, for the Colonel's mother was certainly a Digby,

and the Colonel impaled the Digby arms. *En revanche*, as the French say, for these marital connections, Mrs Pompley had her own favourite affinity, which she specially selected from all others when she most desired to produce effect; nay, even upon ordinary occasions the name rose spontaneously to her lips—the name of the Honourable Mrs M'Catchley. Was the fashion of a gown or cap admired, her cousin, Mrs M'Catchley, had just sent to her the pattern from Paris. Was it a question whether the Ministry would stand, Mrs M'Catchley was in the secret, but Mrs Pompley had been requested not to say. Did it freeze, "my cousin, Mrs M'Catchley, had written word that the icebergs at the Pole were supposed to be coming this way." Did the sun glow with more than usual fervour, Mrs M'Catchley had informed her "that it was Sir Henry Halford's decided opinion that it was on account of the cholera." The good people knew all that was doing at London, at court, in this world—nay, almost in the other—through the medium of the Honourable Mrs M'Catchley. Mrs M'Catchley was, moreover, the most elegant of women, the wittiest creature, the dearest. King George the Fourth had presumed to admire Mrs M'Catchley; but Mrs M'Catchley, though no prude, let him see that she was proof against the corruptions of a throne. So long had the ears of Mrs Pompley's friends been filled with the renown of Mrs M'Catchley, that at last Mrs M'Catchley was secretly supposed to be a myth, a creature of the elements, a poetic fiction of Mrs Pompley's. Richard Avenel, however, though by no means a credulous man, was an implicit believer in Mrs M'Catchley. He had learned that she was a widow—an honourable by birth, an honourable by marriage—living on her handsome jointure, and refusing offers every day that she so lived. Somehow or other, whenever Richard Avenel thought of a wife, he thought of the Honourable Mrs M'Catchley. Perhaps that romantic attachment to the fair invisible preserved him heart-whole amongst the temptations of Screwstown. Suddenly, to the astonishment of the Abbey Gardens, Mrs M'Catchley proved her identity, and arrived at Colonel Pompley's in a handsome travelling-carriage, attended by her maid and footman. She had come to stay some weeks—a tea-party was given in her

honour. Mr Avenel and his nephew were invited. Colonel Pompley, who kept his head clear in the midst of the greatest excitement, had a desire to get from the Corporation a lease of a piece of ground adjoining his garden, and he no sooner saw Richard Avenel enter, than he caught him by the button, and drew him into a quiet corner in order to secure his interest. Leonard, meanwhile, was borne on by the stream, till his progress was arrested by a sofa-table at which sate Mrs M'Catchley herself, with Mrs Pompley by her side. For on this great occasion the hostess had abandoned her proper post at the entrance, and, whether to show her respect to Mrs M'Catchley, or to show Mrs M'Catchley her wellbred contempt for the people of Screwstown, remained in state by her friend, honouring only the *élite* of the town with introductions to the illustrious visitor.

Mrs M'Catchley was a very fine woman—a woman who justified Mrs Pompley's pride in her. Her cheek-bones were rather high, it is true, but that proved the purity of her Caledonian descent; for the rest, she had a brilliant complexion, heightened by a *soupçon* of rouge—good eyes and teeth, a showy figure, and all the ladies of Screwstown pronounced her dress to be perfect. She might have arrived at that age at which one intends to stop for the next ten years, but even a Frenchman would not have called her *passée*—that is, for a widow. For a spinster, it would have been different.

Looking round her with a glass, which Mrs Pompley was in the habit of declaring that "Mrs M'Catchley used like an angel," this lady suddenly perceived Leonard Avenel; and his quiet, simple, thoughtful air and look so contrasted with the stiff beaux to whom she had been presented, that, experienced in fashion as so fine a personage must be supposed to be, she was nevertheless deceived into whispering to Mrs Pompley—

"That young man has really an *air distingué*—who is he?"

"Oh," said Mrs Pompley, in unaffected surprise, "that is the nephew of the rich Vulgarian I was telling you of this morning."

"Ah! and you say that he is Mr Arundel's heir?"

"Avenel—not Arundel—my sweet friend."

"Avenel is not a bad name," said Mrs M'Catchley. "But is the uncle really so rich?"

"The Colonel was trying this very day to guess what he is worth; but he says it is impossible to guess it."

"And the young man is his heir?"

"It is thought so; and reading for College, I hear. They say he is clever."

"Present him, my love; I like clever people," said Mrs M'Catchley, falling back languidly.

About ten minutes afterwards, Richard Avenel, having effected his escape from the Colonel, and his gaze being attracted towards the sofa-table by the buzz of the admiring crowd, beheld his nephew in animated conversation with the long-cherished idol of his dreams. A fierce pang of jealousy shot through his breast. His nephew had never looked so handsome and so intelligent; in fact, poor Leonard had never before been drawn out by a woman of the world, who had learned how to make the most of what little she knew. And, as jealousy operates like a pair of bellows on incipient flames, so, at first sight of the smile which the fair widow bestowed upon Leonard, the heart of Mr Avenel felt in a blaze.

He approached with a step less assured than usual, and, overhearing Leonard's talk, marvelled much at the boy's audacity Mrs M'Catchley had been speaking of Scotland and the Waverley Novels, about which Leonard knew nothing. But he knew Burns, and on Burns he grew artlessly eloquent. Burns the poet and peasant: Leonard might well be eloquent on *him*. Mrs M'Catchley was amused and pleased with his freshness and *naïveté*, so unlike anything she had ever heard or seen, and she drew him on and on till Leonard fell to quoting: And Richard heard, with less respect for the sentiment than might be supposed, that

> "Rank is but the guinea stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that."

"Well!" exclaimed Mr Avenel. "Pretty piece of politeness to tell that to a lady like the Honourable Mrs M'Catchley. You'll excuse him, ma'am."

"Sir!" said Mrs M'Catchley, startled, and lifting her glass.

Leonard, rather confused, rose and offered his chair to Richard, who dropped into it. The lady, without waiting for formal introduction, guessed that she saw the rich uncle.

"Such a sweet poet—Burns!" said she, dropping her glass. "And it is so refreshing to find so much youthful enthusiasm," she added, pointing her fan towards Leonard, who was receding fast among the crowd.

"Well, he is youthful, my nephew—rather green!"

"Don't say green!" said Mrs M'Catchley. Richard blushed scarlet. He was afraid he had committed himself to some expression low and shocking. The lady resumed, "Say unsophisticated."

"A tarnation long word," thought Richard; but he prudently bowed, and held his tongue.

"Young men now-a-days," continued Mrs M'Catchley, resettling herself on the sofa, "affect to be so old. They don't dance, and they don't read, and they don't talk much; and a great many of them wear *toupets* before they are two-and-twenty!"

Richard mechanically passed his hand through his thick curls. But he was still mute; he was still ruefully chewing the cud of the epithet *green*. What occult horrid meaning did the word convey to ears polite? Why should he not say "green?"

"A very fine young man your nephew, sir," resumed Mrs M'Catchley.

Richard grunted.

"And seems full of talent. Not yet at the University? Will he go to Oxford or Cambridge?"

"I have not made up my mind yet, if I shall send him to the University at all."

"A young man of his expectations!" exclaimed Mrs M'Catchley, artfully.

"Expectations!" repeated Richard, firing up. "Has the boy been talking to you of his expectations?"

"No, indeed, sir. But the nephew of the rich Mr Avenel. Ah, one hears a great deal, you know, of rich people; it is the penalty of wealth, Mr Avenel!"

Richard was very much flattered. His crest rose.

"And they say," continued Mrs M'Catchley, dropping out her words very slowly, as she adjusted her blonde scarf, "that Mr Avenel has resolved not to marry."

"The devil they do, ma'am!" bolted out Richard gruffly; and then, ashamed of his *lapsus linguæ*, screwed up his lips firmly, and glared on the company with an eye of indignant fire.

Mrs M'Catchley observed him over her fan. Richard turned abruptly, and she withdrew her eyes modestly, and raised the fan.

"She's a real beauty," said Richard, between his teeth.

The fan fluttered.

Five minutes afterwards, the widow and the bachelor seemed so much at their ease that Mrs Pompley—who had been forced to leave her friend, in order to receive the Dean's lady—could scarcely believe her eyes when she returned to the sofa.

Now, it was from that evening that Mr Richard Avenel exhibited the change of mood which I have described. And from that evening he abstained from taking Leonard with him to any of the parties in the Abbey Gardens.

CHAPTER IX.

Some days after this memorable *soirée*, Colonel Pompley sate alone in his drawing-room (which opened pleasantly on an old-fashioned garden) absorbed in the house bills. For Colonel Pompley did not leave that domestic care to his lady—perhaps she was too grand for it. Colonel Pompley with his own sonorous voice ordered the joints, and with his own heroic hand dispensed the stores. In justice to the Colonel, I must add—at whatever risk of offence to the fair sex—that there was not a house at Screwstown so well managed as the Pompleys'; none which so successfully achieved the difficult art of uniting economy with show. I should despair of conveying to you an idea of the extent to which Colonel Pompley made his income go. It was but seven hundred a-year; and many a family contrive to do less upon three thousand. To be sure, the Pompleys had no children to sponge upon them. What they had they spent all on themselves. Neither, if the Pompleys never exceeded their income, did they pretend to live much within it. The two ends of the year met at Christmas—just met, and no more.

Colonel Pompley sate at his desk. He was in his well-brushed blue coat—buttoned across his breast—his grey trousers fitted tight to his limbs, and fastened under his boots with a link chain. He saved a great deal of money in straps. No one ever saw Colonel Pompley in dressing-gown and slippers. He and his house were alike in order—always fit to be seen—

"From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve."

The Colonel was a short compact man, inclined to be stout—

with a very red face, that seemed not only shaved, but rasped. He wore his hair cropped close, except just in front, where it formed what the hair-dresser called a feather; but it seemed a feather of iron, so stiff and so strong was it. Firmness and precision were emphatically marked on the Colonel's countenance. There was a resolute strain on his features, as if he was always employed in making the two ends meet!

So he sate before his house-book, with his steel-pen in his hand, and making crosses here and notes of interrogation there. "Mrs M'Catchley's maid," said the Colonel to himself, "must be put upon rations. The tea that she drinks! Good Heavens! —tea again!"

There was a modest ring at the outer door. "Too early for a visitor!" thought the Colonel. "Perhaps it is the Water-rates."

The neat man-servant—never seen beyond the offices, save in *grande tenue*, plushed and powdered—entered, and bowed.

"A gentleman, sir, wishes to see you."

"A gentleman," repeated the Colonel, glancing towards the clock. "Are you sure it is a gentleman?"

The man hesitated. "Why, sir, I ben't exactly sure; but he speaks like a gentleman. He do say he comes from London to see you, sir."

A long and interesting correspondence was then being held between the Colonel and one of his wife's trustees touching the investment of Mrs Pompley's fortune. It might be the trustee —nay, it must be. The trustee had talked of running down to see him.

"Let him come in," said the Colonel; "and when I ring—sandwiches and sherry."

"Beef, sir?"

"Ham."

The Colonel put aside his house-book, and wiped his pen.

In another minute the door opened, and the servant announced

"Mr Digby."

The Colonel's face fell, and he staggered back.

The door closed, and Mr Digby stood in the middle of the

room, leaning on the great writing-table for support. The poor soldier looked sicklier and shabbier, and nearer the end of all things in life and fortune, than when Lord L'Estrange had thrust the pocket-book into his hands. But still the servant showed knowledge of the world in calling him gentleman; there was no other word to apply to him.

"Sir," began Colonel Pompley, recovering himself, and with great solemnity, "I did not expect this pleasure."

The poor visitor stared round him dizzily, and sank into a chair, breathing hard. The Colonel looked as a man only looks upon a poor relation, and buttoned up first one trouser pocket and then the other.

"I thought you were in Canada," said the Colonel at last.

Mr Digby had now got breath to speak, and he said meekly, "The climate would have killed my child, and it is two years since I returned."

"You ought to have found a very good place in England, to make it worth your while to leave Canada."

"She could not have lived through another winter in Canada—the doctor said so."

"Pooh," quoth the Colonel.

Mr Digby drew a long breath. "I would not come to you, Colonel Pompley, while you could think that I came as a beggar for myself."

The Colonel's brow relaxed. "A very honourable sentiment, Mr Digby."

"No: I have gone through a great deal; but you see, Colonel," added the poor relation, with a faint smile, "the campaign is well-nigh over, and peace is at hand."

The Colonel seemed touched.

"Don't talk so, Digby—I don't like it. You are younger than I am—nothing more disagreeable than these gloomy views of things. You have got enough to live upon, you say—at least so I understand you. I am very glad to hear it; and, indeed, I could not assist you—so many claims on me. So it is all very well, Digby."

"Oh, Colonel Pompley," cried the soldier, clasping his hands, and with feverish energy, "I am a suppliant, not for myself,

but my child! I have but one—only one—a girl. She has been so good to me. She will cost you little. Take her when I die; promise her a shelter—a home. I ask no more. You are my nearest relative. I have no other to look to. You have no children of your own. She will be a blessing to you, as she has been all upon earth to me!"

If Colonel Pompley's face was red in ordinary hours, no epithet sufficiently rubicund or sanguineous can express its colour at this appeal. "The man's mad," he said at last, with a tone of astonishment that almost concealed his wrath—"stark mad! I take his child!—lodge and board a great, positive, hungry child! Why, sir, many and many a time have I said to Mrs Pompley, 'Tis a mercy we have no children. We could never live in this style if we had children—never make both ends meet.' Child—the most expensive, ravenous, ruinous thing in the world—a child!"

"She has been accustomed to starve," said Mr Digby, plaintively. "Oh, Colonel, let me see your wife. *Her* heart I can touch—she is a woman."

Unlucky father! A more untoward, unseasonable request the Fates could not have put into his lips.

Mrs Pompley see the Digbies! Mrs Pompley learn the condition of the Colonel's grand connections! The Colonel would never have been his own man again. At the bare idea, he felt as if he could have sunk into the earth with shame. In his alarm he made a stride to the door, with the intention of locking it. Good heavens, if Mrs Pompley should come in! And the man, too, had been announced by name. Mrs Pompley might have learned already that a Digby was with her husband—she might be actually dressing to receive him worthily—there was not a moment to lose.

The Colonel exploded. "Sir, I wonder at your impudence. See Mrs Pompley! Hush, sir, hush!—hold your tongue. I have disowned your connection. I will not have my wife—a woman, sir, of the first family—disgraced by it. Yes; you need not fire up. John Pompley is not a man to be bullied in his own house. I say disgraced. Did not you run into debt, and spend your fortune? Did not you marry a low creature—

a vulgarian—a tradesman's daughter?—and your poor father such a respectable man—a beneficed clergyman! Did not you sell your commission? Heaven knows what became of the money! Did not you turn (I shudder to say it) a common stage-player, sir? And then, when you were on your last legs, did I not give you £200 out of my own purse to go to Canada? And now here you are again—and ask me, with a coolness that —that takes away my breath—takes away—my breath, sir—to provide for the child you have thought proper to have;—a child whose connections on the mother's side are of the most abject and discreditable condition. Leave my house, leave it—good heavens, sir, not that way!—this." And the Colonel opened the glass-door that led into the garden. "I will let you out this way. If Mrs Pompley should see you!" And with that thought the Colonel absolutely hooked his arm into his poor relation's, and hurried him into the garden.

Mr Digby said not a word, but he struggled ineffectually to escape from the Colonel's arm; and his colour went and came, came and went, with a quickness that showed that in those shrunken veins there were still some drops of a soldier's blood.

But the Colonel had now reached a little postern-door in the garden wall. He opened the latch, and thrust out his poor cousin. Then looking down the lane, which was long, straight, and narrow, and seeing it was quite solitary, his eye fell upon the forlorn man, and remorse shot through his heart. For a moment the hardest of all kinds of avarice, that of the *genteel*, relaxed its gripe. For a moment the most intolerant of all forms of pride, that which is based upon false pretences, hushed its voice, and the Colonel hastily drew out his purse. "There," said he—"that is all I can do for you. Do leave the town as quick as you can, and don't mention your name to any one. Your father was such a respectable man—beneficed clergyman!"

"And paid for your commission, Mr Pompley. My name!—I am not ashamed of it. But do not fear I shall claim your relationship. No; I am ashamed of *you!*"

The poor cousin put aside the purse, still stretched towards him, with a scornful hand, and walked firmly down the lane.

Colonel Pompley stood irresolute. At that moment a window in his house was thrown open. He heard the noise, turned round, and saw his wife looking out.

Colonel Pompley sneaked back through the shrubbery, hiding himself amongst the trees.

CHAPTER X.

"Ill-luck is a *bêtise*," said the great Cardinal Richelieu; and on the long run, I fear, his eminence was right. If you could drop Dick Avenel and Mr Digby in the middle of Oxford Street —Dick in a fustian jacket, Digby in a suit of superfine—Dick with five shillings in his pocket, Digby with a thousand pounds —and if, at the end of ten years, you looked up your two men, Dick would be on his road to a fortune, Digby—what we have seen him! Yet Digby had no vice; he did not drink, nor gamble. What was he, then? Helpless. He had been an only son—a spoiled child—brought up as "a gentleman;" that is, as a man who was not expected to be able to turn his hand to anything. He entered, as we have seen, a very expensive regiment, wherein he found himself, at his father's death, with £4000, and the incapacity to say "No." Not naturally extravagant, but without an idea of the value of money—the easiest, gentlest, best-tempered man whom example ever led astray. This part of his career comprised a very common history—the poor man living on equal terms with the rich. Debt; recourse to usurers; bills signed sometimes for others, renewed at twenty per cent; the £4000 melted like snow; pathetic appeal to relations; relations have children of their own; small help given grudgingly, eked out by much advice, and coupled with conditions. Amongst the conditions there was a very proper and prudent one—exchange into a less expensive regiment. Exchange effected; peace; obscure country quarters; *ennui*, flute-playing, and idleness. Mr Digby had no resources on a rainy day—except flute-playing; pretty girl of inferior rank; all the officers after

her; Digby smitten; pretty girl very virtuous; Digby forms honourable intentions; excellent sentiments; imprudent marriage. Digby falls in life; colonel's lady will not associate with Mrs Digby; Digby cut by his whole kith and kin; many disagreeable circumstances in regimental life; Digby sells out; love in a cottage; execution in ditto. Digby had been much applauded as an amateur actor; thinks of the stage; genteel comedy—a gentlemanlike profession. Tries in a provincial town, under another name; unhappily succeeds; life of an actor; hand-to-mouth life; illness; chest affected; Digby's voice becomes hoarse and feeble; not aware of it; attributes failing success to ignorant provincial public; appears in London; is hissed; returns to provinces; sinks into very small parts; prison; despair; wife dies; appeal again to relations; a subscription made to get rid of him; send him out of the country; place in Canada—superintendant to an estate, £150 a-year; pursued by ill-luck; never before fit for business, not fit now; honest as the day, but keeps slovenly accounts; child cannot bear the winter of Canada; Digby wrapped up in the child; return home; mysterious life for two years; child patient, thoughtful, loving; has learned to work; manages for father; often supports him; constitution rapidly breaking; thought of what will become of his child—worst disease of all. Poor Digby!—Never did a base, cruel, unkind thing in his life; and here he is, walking down the lane from Colonel Pompley's house! Now, if Digby had but learned a little of the world's cunning, I think he would have succeeded even with Colonel Pompley. Had he spent the £100 received from Lord L'Estrange with a view to effect—had he bestowed a fitting wardrobe on himself and his pretty Helen; had he stopped at the last stage, taken thence a smart chaise and pair, and presented himself at Colonel Pompley's in a way that would not have discredited the Colonel's connection, and then, instead of praying for home and shelter, asked the Colonel to become guardian to his child in case of his death, I have a strong notion that the Colonel, in spite of his avarice, would have stretched both ends so as to take in Helen Digby. But our poor friend had no such arts. Indeed, of the £100 he had already very little left, for before

leaving town he had committed what Sheridan considered the extreme of extravagance—frittered away his money in paying his debts; and as for dressing up Helen and himself—if that thought had ever occurred to him, he would have rejected it as foolish. He would have thought that the more he showed his poverty, the more he would be pitied—the worse mistake a poor cousin can commit. According to Theophrastus, the partridge of Paphlagonia has two hearts; so have most men; it is the common mistake of the unlucky to knock at the wrong one.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr Digby entered the room of the inn in which he had left Helen. She was seated by the window, and looking out wistfully on the narrow street, perhaps at the children at play. There had never been a playtime for Helen Digby. She sprang forward as her father came in. His coming was her holiday.

"We must go back to London," said Mr Digby, sinking helplessly on the chair. Then with his sort of sickly smile—for he was bland even to his child—"Will you kindly inquire when the first coach leaves?"

All the active cares of their careful life devolved upon that quiet child. She kissed her father, placed before him a cough mixture which he had brought from London, and went out silently to make the necessary inquiries, and prepare for the journey back.

At eight o'clock the father and child were seated in the night-coach, with one other passenger—a man muffled up to the chin. After the first mile, the man let down one of the windows. Though it was summer, the air was chill and raw. Digby shivered and coughed.

Helen placed her hand on the window, and, leaning towards the passenger, whispered softly.

"Eh!" said the passenger, "draw up the windows? You have got your own window; this is mine. Oxygen, young lady," he added solemnly, "oxygen is the breath of life. Cott, child!" he continued, with suppressed choler, and a Welsh pronunciation, "Cott! let us breathe and live."

Helen was frightened, and recoiled.

Her father, who had not heard, or had not heeded, this colloquy, retreated into the corner, put up the collar of his coat, and coughed again.

"It is cold, my dear," said he languidly to Helen.

The passenger caught the word, and replied indignantly, but as if soliloquising—

"Cold—ugh! I do believe the English are the stuffiest people! Look at their four-post beds!—all the curtains drawn, shutters closed, board before the chimney—not a house with a ventilator! Cold—ugh!"

The window next Mr Digby did not fit well into its frame.

"There is a sad draught," said the invalid.

Helen instantly occupied herself in stopping up the chinks of the window with her handkerchief. Mr Digby glanced ruefully at the other window. The look, which was very eloquent, aroused yet more the traveller's spleen.

"Pleasant!" said he. "Cott! I suppose you will ask me to go outside next! But people who travel in a coach should know the law of a coach. I don't interfere with your window; you have no business to interfere with mine."

"Sir, I did not speak," said Mr Digby meekly.

"But Miss here did."

"Ah, sir!" said Helen plaintively, "if you knew how papa suffers!" And her hand again moved towards the obnoxious window.

"No, my dear; the gentleman is in his right," said Mr Digby; and, bowing with his wonted suavity, he added, "Excuse her, sir. She thinks a great deal too much of me."

The passenger said nothing, and Helen nestled closer to her father, and strove to screen him from the air.

The passenger moved uneasily. "Well," said he, with a sort of snort, "air is air, and right is right: but here goes"—and he hastily drew up the window.

Helen turned her face full towards the passenger with a grateful expression, visible even in the dim light.

"You are very kind, sir," said poor Mr Digby; "I am ashamed to"—his cough choked the rest of the sentence.

The passenger, who was a plethoric, sanguineous man, felt as

if he were stifling. But he took off his wrappers, and resigned the oxygen like a hero.

Presently he drew nearer to the sufferer, and laid hand on his wrist.

"You are feverish, I fear. I am a medical man. St!—one—two. Cott! you should not travel; you are not fit for it!"

Mr Digby shook his head; he was too feeble to reply.

The passenger thrust his hand into his coat-pocket, and drew out what seemed a cigar-case, but what, in fact, was a leathern repertory, containing a variety of minute phials. From one of these phials he extracted two tiny globules. "There," said he; "open your mouth—put those on the tip of your tongue. They will lower the pulse—check the fever. Be better presently—but should not travel—want rest—you should be in bed. Aconite!—Henbane!—hum! Your papa is of fair complexion—a timid character, I should say—a horror of work, perhaps. Eh, child?"

"Sir!" faltered Helen, astonished and alarmed.—Was the man a conjuror?

"A case for *Phosphor!*" cried the passenger; "that fool Browne would have said *arsenic*. Don't be persuaded to take arsenic!"

"Arsenic, sir!" echoed the mild Digby. "No; however unfortunate a man may be, I think, sir, that suicide is—tempting, perhaps, but highly criminal."

"Suicide," said the passenger tranquilly—"suicide is my hobby! You have no symptom of that kind, you say?"

"Good heavens! No, sir."

"If ever you feel violently impelled to drown yourself, take *pulsatilla*. But if you feel a preference towards blowing out your brains, accompanied with weight in the limbs, loss of appetite, dry cough, and bad corns—*sulphuret of antimony*. Don't forget."

Though poor Mr Digby confusedly thought that the gentleman was out of his mind, yet he tried politely to say "that he was much obliged, and would be sure to remember;" but his tongue failed him, and his own ideas grew perplexed. His head fell back heavily, and he sank into a silence which seemed that of sleep.

The traveller looked hard at Helen, as she gently drew her father's head on her shoulder, and there pillowed it with a tenderness which was more that of mother than child.

"Moral affections—soft—compassionate!—a good child, and would go well with—*pulsatilla.*"

Helen held up her finger, and glanced from her father to the traveller, and then to her father again.

"Certainly—*pulsatilla!*" muttered the homœopathist; and, ensconcing himself in his own corner, he also sought to sleep. But, after vain efforts, accompanied by restless gestures and movements, he suddenly started up, and again extracted his phial-book.

"What the deuce are they to me!" he muttered. "Morbid sensibility of character—*coffee?* No!—accompanied by vivacity and violence—*Nux!*" He brought his book to the window, contrived to read the label on a pigmy bottle. *Nux!* that's it," he said—and he swallowed a globule!

"Now," quoth he, after a pause, "I don't care a straw for the misfortunes of other people—nay, I have half a mind to let down the window."

Helen looked up.

"But I'll not," he added resolutely; and this time he fell fairly asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

The coach stopped at eleven o'clock, to allow the passengers to sup. The homœopathist woke up, got out, gave himself a shake, and inhaled the fresh air into his vigorous lungs with an evident sensation of delight. He then turned and looked into the coach—

"Let your father get out, my dear," said he, with a tone more gentle than usual. "I should like to see him in-doors—perhaps I can do him good."

But what was Helen's terror when she found that her father did not stir. He was in a deep swoon, and still quite insensible when they lifted him from the carriage. When he recovered his senses, his cough returned, and the effort brought up blood.

It was impossible for him to proceed farther. The homœopathist assisted to undress and put him into bed. And having administered another of his mysterious globules, he inquired of the landlady how far it was to the nearest doctor—for the inn stood by itself in a small hamlet. There was the parish apothecary three miles off. But on hearing that the gentlefolks employed Dr Dosewell, and it was a good seven miles to his house, the homœopathist fetched a deep breath. The coach only stopped a quarter of an hour.

"Cott!" said he angrily to himself—"the *nux* was a failure. My sensibility is chronic. I must go through a long course to get rid of it. Hollo, guard! get out my carpet-bag. I shan't go on to-night."

And the good man, after a very slight supper, went up-stairs again to the sufferer.

"Shall I send for Dr Dosewell, sir?" asked the landlady, stopping him at the door.

"Hum! At what hour to-morrow does the next coach to London pass?"

"Not before eight, sir."

"Well, send for the doctor to be here at seven. That leaves us at least some hours free from allopathy and murder," grunted the disciple of Hahnemann, as he entered the room.

Whether it was the globule that the homœopathist had administered, or the effect of nature, aided by repose, that checked the effusion of blood, and restored some temporary strength to the poor sufferer, is more than it becomes one not of the Faculty to opine. But certainly Mr Digby seemed better, and he gradually fell into a profound sleep, but not till the docter had put his ear to his chest, tapped it with his hand, and asked several questions; after which the homœopathist retired into a corner of the room, and, leaning his face on his hand, seemed to meditate. From his thoughts he was disturbed by a gentle touch. Helen was kneeling at his feet.

"Is he very ill—very?" said she; and her fond wistful eyes were fixed on the physician's with all the earnestness of despair.

"Your father *is* very ill," replied the doctor after a short pause. "He cannot move hence for some days at least. I am going to London—shall I call on your relations, and tell some of them to join you?"

"No, thank you, sir," answered Helen, colouring. "But do not fear; I can nurse papa. I think he has been worse before—that is, he has complained more."

The homœopathist rose and took two strides across the room, then he paused by the bed, and listened to the breathing of the sleeping man.

He stole back to the child, who was still kneeling, took her in his arms and kissed her. "Tamn it," said he angrily, and putting her down, "go to bed now—you are not wanted any more."

"Please, sir," said Helen, "I cannot leave him so. If he wakes he would miss me."

The doctor's hand trembled; he had recourse to his globules. "Anxiety—grief suppressed," muttered he. "Don't you want to cry, my dear? Cry—do!"

"I can't," murmured Helen.

"*Pulsatilla!*" said the doctor, almost with triumph. "I said so from the first. Open your mouth—here! Good-night. My room is opposite—No. 6; call me if he wakes."

CHAPTER XIII.

At seven o'clock Dr Dosewell arrived, and was shown into the room of the homœopathist, who, already up and dressed, had visited his patient.

"My name is Morgan," said the homœopathist—"I am a physician. I leave in your hands a patient whom, I fear, neither I nor you can restore. Come and look at him."

The two doctors went into the sick-room. Mr Digby was very feeble, but he had recovered his consciousness, and inclined his head courteously.

"I am sorry to cause so much trouble," said he. The homœopathist drew away Helen; the allopathist seated himself by the bed-side and put his questions, felt the pulse, sounded the lungs, and looked at the tongue of the patient. Helen's eye was fixed on the strange doctor, and her colour rose, and her eye sparkled when he got up cheerfully, and said in a pleasant voice, "You may have a little tea."

"Tea!" growled the homœopathist—"barbarian!"

"He is better, then, sir?" said Helen, creeping to the allopathist.

"Oh, yes, my dear—certainly; and we shall do very well, I hope."

The two doctors then withdrew.

"Last about a week!" said Dr Dosewell, smiling pleasantly, and showing a very white set of teeth.

"I should have said a month; but our systems are different," replied Dr Morgan drily.

Dr Dosewell, (courteously.)—"We country doctors bow to

our metropolitan superiors; what would you advise? You would venture, perhaps, the experiment of bleeding."

Dr Morgan, (spluttering and growing Welsh, which he never did but in excitement.)—"Pleed! Cott in heaven! do you think I am a butcher—an executioner? Pleed! Never."

Dr Dosewell.—"I don't find it answer, myself, when both lungs are gone! But perhaps you are for inhaling."

Dr Morgan.—"Fiddledee!"

Dr Dosewell, (with some displeasure.)—"What would you advise, then, in order to prolong our patient's life for a month?"

Dr Morgan.—"Give him *Rhus!*"

Dr Dosewell.—"Rhus, sir! *Rhus!* I don't know that medicine. *Rhus!*"

Dr Morgan.—"*Rhus Toxicodendron.*"

The length of the last word excited Dr Dosewell's respect. A word of five syllables—this was something like! He bowed deferentially, but still looked puzzled. At last he said, smiling frankly, "You great London practitioners have so many new medicines; may I ask what Rhus toxico—toxico—"

"Dendron."

"Is?"

"The juice of the Upas—vulgarly called the Poison-Tree."

Dr Dosewell started.

"Upas—poison-tree—little birds that come under the shade fall down dead! You give upas juice in these desperate cases—what's the dose?"

Dr Morgan grinned maliciously, and produced a globule the size of a small pin's head.

Dr Dosewell recoiled in disgust.

"Oh!" said he very coldly, and assuming at once an air of superb superiority, "I see—a homœopathist, sir!"

"A homœopathist!"

"Um!"

"Um!"

"A strange system, Dr Morgan," said Dr Dosewell, recovering his cheerful smile, but with a curl of contempt in it, "and would soon do for the druggists."

"Serve 'em right. The druggists soon do for the patients."

"Sir!"

"Sir!"

Dr Dosewell, (with dignity.)—"You don't know, perhaps, Dr Morgan, that I am an apothecary as well as a surgeon. In fact," he added, with a certain grand humility, "I have not yet taken a diploma, and am but Doctor by courtesy."

Dr Morgan.—"All one, sir! Doctor signs the death-warrant —'pothecary does the deed!"

Dr Dosewell, (with a withering sneer.)—"Certainly we don't profess to keep a dying man alive upon the juice of the deadly upas-tree."

Dr Morgan, (complacently.)—"Of course you don't. There are no poisons with us. That's just the difference between you and me, Dr Dosewell!"

Dr Dosewell, (pointing to the homœopathist's travelling pharmacopœia, and with affected candour.)—"Indeed, I have always said that if you can do no good, you can do no harm, with your infinitesimals."

Dr Morgan, who had been obtuse to the insinuation of poisoning, fires up violently at the charge of doing no harm.

"You know nothing about it! I could kill quite as many people as you, if I chose it; but I don't choose."

Dr Dosewell, (shrugging up his shoulders.)—"Sir! 'tis no use arguing; the thing's against common sense. In short, it is my firm belief that it is—is a complete—"

Dr Morgan.—"A complete what?"

Dr Dosewell, (provoked to the utmost.)—"Humbug!"

Dr Morgan.—"Humpug! Cott in heaven! You old—"

Dr Dosewell.—"Old what, sir?"

Dr Morgan, (at home in a series of alliteral vowels, which none but a Cymbrian could have uttered without gasping.)—"Old allopathical anthropophagite!"

Dr Dosewell, (starting up, seizing by the back the chair on which he had sate, and bringing it down violently on its four legs.)—"Sir!"

Dr Morgan, (imitating the action with his own chair.)—"Sir!"

Dr Dosewell.—"You're abusive."

Dr Morgan.—"You're impertinent."

Dr Dosewell.—"Sir!"

Dr Morgan.—"Sir!"

The two rivals fronted each other.

They were both athletic men, and fiery men. Dr Dosewell was the taller, but Dr Morgan was the stouter. Dr Dosewell on the mother's side was Irish; but Dr Morgan on both sides was Welsh. All things considered, I would have backed Dr Morgan if it had come to blows. But, luckily for the honour of science, here the chambermaid knocked at the door, and said, "The coach is coming, sir."

Dr Morgan recovered his temper and his manners at that announcement. "Dr Dosewell," said he, "I have been too hot—I apologise."

"Dr Morgan," answered the allopathist, "I forgot myself. Your hand, sir."

Dr Morgan.—"We are both devoted to humanity, though with different opinions. We should respect each other."

Dr Dosewell.—"Where look for liberality, if men of science are illiberal to their brethren?"

Dr Morgan, (aside.)—"The old hypocrite! He would pound me in a mortar if the law would let him."

Dr Dosewell, (aside.)—"The wretched charlatan! I should like to pound him in a mortar."

Dr Morgan.—"Good-bye, my esteemed and worthy brother."

Dr Dosewell.—"My excellent friend, good-bye."

Dr Morgan, (returning in haste.)—"I forgot. I don't think our poor patient is very rich. I confide him to your disinterested benevolence."—(Hurries away.)

Dr Dosewell, (in a rage.)—"Seven miles at six o'clock in the morning, and perhaps done out of my fee! Quack! Villain!"

Meanwhile, Dr Morgan had returned to the sick-room.

"I must wish you farewell," said he to poor Mr Digby, who was languidly sipping his tea. "But you are in the hands of a—of a—gentleman in the profession."

"You have been too kind—I am shocked," said Mr Digby. "Helen, where's my purse?"

Dr Morgan paused.

He paused, first, because it must be owned that his practice was restricted, and a fee gratified the vanity natural to unappreciated talent, and had the charm of novelty which is sweet to human nature itself. Secondly, he was a man

> "Who knew his rights; and, knowing, dared maintain."

He had resigned a coach fare—stayed a night—and thought he had relieved his patient. He had a right to his fee.

On the other hand, he paused, because, though he had small practice, he was tolerably well off, and did not care for money in itself, and he suspected his patient to be no Crœsus.

Meanwhile, the purse was in Helen's hand. He took it from her, and saw but a few sovereigns within the well-worn network. He drew the child a little aside.

"Answer me, my dear, frankly—is your papa rich?" And he glanced at the shabby clothes strewed on the chair, and Helen's faded frock.

"Alas, no!" said Helen, hanging her head.

"Is that all you have?"

"All."

"I am ashamed to offer you two guineas," said Mr Digby's hollow voice from the bed.

"And I should be still more ashamed to take them. Goodbye, sir. Come here, my child. Keep your money, and don't waste it on the other doctor more than you can help. His medicines can do your father no good. But I suppose you must have some. He's no physician, therefore there's no fee. He'll send a bill—it can't be much. You understand. And now, God bless you."

Dr Morgan was off. But as he paid the landlady his bill, he said, considerately, "The poor people up-stairs can pay you, but not that doctor—and he's of no use. Be kind to the little girl, and get the doctor to tell his patient (quietly, of course) to write to his friends—soon—you understand. Somebody must take charge of the poor child. And stop—hold your hand; take care—these globules for the little girl when her father dies

—(here the Doctor muttered to himself, 'grief;—*aconite*')—and if she cries too much afterwards—these—(don't mistake.) Tears; —*caustic!*"

"Come, sir," cried the coachman.

"Coming;—tears—*caustic*," repeated the homœopathist, pulling out his handkerchief and his phial-book together as he got into the coach: and he hastily swallowed his antilachrymal.

CHAPTER XIV.

Richard Avenel was in a state of great nervous excitement. He proposed to give an entertainment of a kind wholly new to the experience of Screwstown. Mrs M'Catchley had described with much eloquence the *Déjeunês dansants* of her fashionable friends residing in the elegant suburbs of Wimbledon and Fulham. She declared that nothing was so agreeable. She had even said point-blank to Mr Avenel, "Why don't you give a *Déjeunê dansant?*" And, therewith, a *Déjeunê dansant* Mr Avenel resolved to give.

The day was fixed, and Mr Avenel entered into all the requisite preparations, with the energy of a man and the providence of a woman.

One morning as he stood musing on the lawn, irresolute as to the best site for the tents, Leonard came up to him with an open letter in his hand.

"My dear uncle," said he, softly.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr Avenel, with a start. "Ha—well—what now?"

"I have just received a letter from Mr Dale. He tells me that my poor mother is very restless and uneasy, because he cannot assure her that he has heard from me; and his letter requires an answer. Indeed, I shall seem very ungrateful to him—to all—if I do not write."

Richard Avenel's brows met. He uttered an impatient "pish!" and turned away. Then coming back, he fixed his clear hawk-like eye on Leonard's ingenuous countenance, linked his arm in his nephew's, and drew him into the shrubbery.

"Well, Leonard," said he, after a pause, "it is time that I should give you some idea of my plans with regard to you. You have seen my manner of living—some difference from what you ever saw before, I calculate! Now I have given you, what no one gave me, a lift in the world; and where I place you, there you must help yourself."

"Such is my duty, and my desire," said Leonard, heartily.

"Good. You are a clever lad, and a genteel lad, and will do me credit. I have had doubts of what is best for you. At one time I thought of sending you to college. That, I know, is Mr Dale's wish; perhaps it is your own. But I have given up that idea; I have something better for you. You have a clear head for business, and are a capital arithmetician. I think of bringing you up to superintend my business; by and by I will admit you into partnership; and before you are thirty you will be a rich man. Come, does that suit you?"

"My dear uncle," said Leonard frankly, but much touched by this generosity, "it is not for me to have a choice. I should have preferred going to college, because there I might gain independence for myself, and cease to be a burden on you. Moreover, my heart moves me to studies more congenial with the college than the counting-house. But all this is nothing compared with my wish to be of use to you, and to prove in any way, however feebly, my gratitude for all your kindness."

"You're a good, grateful, sensible lad," exclaimed Richard heartily; "and believe me, though I'm a rough diamond, I have your true interest at heart. You *can* be of use to me, and in being so you will best serve yourself. To tell you the truth, I have some idea of changing my condition. There's a lady of fashion and quality who, I think, may condescend to become Mrs Avenel; and if so, I shall probably reside a great part of the year in London. I don't want to give up my business. No other investment will yield the same interest. But you can soon learn to superintend it for me, as some day or other I may retire, and then you can step in. Once a member of our great commercial class, and with your talents you may be anything—member of parliament, and after that, minister of state, for what I know. And my wife—hem!—that is to be—has great

connections, and you shall marry well; and—oh, the Avenels will hold their heads with the highest, after all! Damn the aristocracy—we clever fellows will be the aristocrats—eh!" Richard rubbed his hands.

Certainly, as we have seen, Leonard, especially in his earlier steps to knowledge, had repined at his position in the many degrees of life—certainly he was still ambitious—certainly he could not now have returned contentedly to the humble occupation he had left; and woe to the young man who does not hear with a quickened pulse, and brightening eye, words that promise independence, and flatter with the hope of distinction. Still, it was with all the reaction of chill and mournful disappointment that Leonard, a few hours after this dialogue with his uncle, found himself alone in the fields, and pondering over the prospects before him. He had set his heart upon completing his intellectual education, upon developing those powers within him which yearned for an arena of literature, and revolted from the routine of trade. But to his credit be it said that he vigorously resisted this natural disappointment, and by degrees schooled himself to look cheerfully on the path imposed on his duty, and sanctioned by the manly sense that was at the core of his character.

I believe that this self-conquest showed that the boy had true genius. The false genius would have written sonnets and despaired.

But still, Richard Avenel left his nephew sadly perplexed as to the knotty question from which their talk on the future had diverged—viz., should he write to the Parson, and assure the fears of his mother? How do so without Richard's consent, when Richard had on a former occasion so imperiously declared that, if he did, it would lose his mother all that Richard intended to settle on her? While he was debating this matter with his conscience, leaning against a stile that interrupted a path to the town, Leonard Fairfield was startled by an exclamation. He looked up, and beheld Mr Sprott, the tinker.

CHAPTER XV.

The tinker, blacker and grimmer than ever, stared hard at the altered person of his old acquaintance, and extended his sable fingers, as if inclined to convince himself by the sense of touch that it was Leonard in the flesh that he beheld, under vestments so marvellously elegant and preternaturally spruce.

Leonard shrunk mechanically from the contact, while in great surprise he faltered—

"You here, Mr Sprott! What could bring you so far from home?"

"'Ome!" echoed the tinker, "I 'as no 'ome! or raythur, d'ye see, Muster Fairfilt, I makes myself at 'ome verever I goes! Lor' love ye, I ben't settled on no parridge. I vanders here and I vanders there, and that's my 'ome verever I can mend my kettles and sell my tracks!"

So saying, the tinker slid his paniers on the ground, gave a grunt of release and satisfaction, and seated himself with great composure on the stile, from which Leonard had retreated.

"But, dash my vig," resumed Mr Sprott, as he once more surveyed Leonard, "vy, you bees a rale gentleman now, sure*ly!* Vot's the dodge—eh?"

"Dodge!" repeated Leonard mechanically—"I don't understand you." Then, thinking that it was neither necessary nor expedient to keep up his acquaintance with Mr Sprott, nor prudent to expose himself to the battery of questions which he foresaw that further parley would bring upon him, he extended a crown-piece to the tinker; and saying with a half smile, "You must excuse me for leaving you—I have business in the

town; and do me the favour to accept this trifle," he walked briskly off.

The tinker looked long at the crown-piece, and then sliding it into his pocket, said to himself—

"Ho—'ush-money! No go, my swell cove."

After venting that brief soliloquy he sat silent a little while, till Leonard was nearly out of sight, then rose, resumed his fardel, and creeping quick along the hedgerows, followed Leonard towards the town. Just in the last field, as he looked over the hedge, he saw Leonard accosted by a gentleman of comely mien and important swagger. That gentleman soon left the young man, and came, whistling loud, up the path, and straight towards the tinker. Mr Sprott looked round, but the hedge was too neat to allow of a good hiding-place, so he put a bold front on it, and stepped forth like a man. But, alas for him! before he got into the public path, the proprietor of the land, Mr Richard Avenel, (for the gentleman was no less a personage,) had spied out the trespasser, and called to him with a "Hillo, fellow," that bespoke all the dignity of a man who owns acres, and all the wrath of a man who beholds those acres impudently invaded.

The tinker stopped, and Mr Avenel stalked up to him.

"What the devil are you doing on my property, lurking by my hedge? I suspect you are an incendiary!"

"I be a tinker," quoth Mr Sprott, not louting low, (for a sturdy republican was Mr Sprott,) but like a lord of humankind,

"Pride in his port, defiance in his eye."

Mr Avenel's fingers itched to knock the tinker's villanous hat off his jacobinical head, but he repressed the undignified impulse by thrusting both hands deep into his trousers' pockets.

"A tinker!" he cried—"that's a vagrant; and I'm a magistrate, and I've a great mind to send you to the treadmill—that I have. What do you do here, I say? You have not answered my question?"

"What does I do 'ere?" said Mr Sprott. "Vy, you had better ax my crakter of the young gent I saw you talking with just now; he knows me!"

"What! my nephew know you?"

"W—hew," whistled the tinker, "your nephew is it, sir? I have a great respek for your family. I've knowed Mrs Fairfilt, the vashervoman, this many a year. I 'umbly ax your pardon." And he took off his hat this time.

Mr Avenel turned red and white in a breath. He growled out something inaudible, turned on his heel, and strode off. The tinker watched him as he had watched Leonard, and then dogged the uncle as he had dogged the nephew. I don't presume to say that there was cause and effect in what happened that night, but it was what is called "a curious coincidence" that that night one of Richard Avenel's ricks was set on fire; and that that day he had called Mr Sprott an incendiary. Mr Sprott was a man of a very high spirit, and did not forgive an insult easily. His nature was inflammatory, and so was that of the lucifers which he always carried about him, with his tracts and glue-pots.

The next morning there was an inquiry made for the tinker, but he had disappeared from the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was a fortunate thing that the *déjeuné dansant* so absorbed Mr Richard Avenel's thoughts, that even the conflagration of his rick could not scare away the graceful and poetic images connected with that pastoral festivity. He was even loose and careless in the questions he put to Leonard about the tinker; nor did he set justice in pursuit of that itinerant trader; for, to say truth, Richard Avenel was a man accustomed to make enemies amongst the lower orders; and though he suspected Mr Sprott of destroying his rick, yet, when he once set about suspecting, he found he had quite as good cause to suspect fifty other persons. How on earth could a man puzzle himself about ricks and tinkers, when all his cares and energies were devoted to a *déjeuné dansant?* It was a maxim of Richard Avenel's, as it ought to be of every clever man, "to do one thing at a time;" and therefore he postponed all other considerations till the *déjeuné dansant* was fairly done with. Amongst these considerations was the letter which Leonard wished to write to the Parson. "Wait a bit, and we will *both* write!" said Richard, good-humouredly, "the moment the *déjeuné dansant* is over!"

It must be owned that this fête was no ordinary provincial ceremonial. Richard Avenel was a man to do a thing well when he set about it—

"He soused the cabbage with a bounteous heart."

By little and little his first notions had expanded, till what had been meant to be only neat and elegant now embraced the costly and magnificent. Artificers accustomed to *déjeunés dansants* came all the way from London to assist, to direct, to create. Hungarian

singers, and Tyrolese singers, and Swiss peasant-women who were to chaunt the *Ranz des Vaches*, and milk cows or make syllabubs, were engaged. The great marquee was decorated as a Gothic banquet hall; the breakfast itself was to consist of "all the delicacies of the season." In short, as Richard Avenel said to himself, "It is a thing once in a way; a thing on which I don't object to spend money, provided that the thing *is*—the thing!"

It had been a matter of grave meditation how to make the society worthy of the revel; for Richard Avenel was not contented with the mere aristocracy of the town—his ambition had grown with his expenses. "Since it will cost so much," said he, "I may as well come it strong, and get in the county."

True, that he was personally acquainted with very few of what are called county families. But still, when a man makes himself of mark in a large town, and can return one of the members whom that town sends to parliament; and when, moreover, that man proposes to give some superb and original entertainment, in which the old can eat and the young can dance, there is no county in the island that has not families enow who will be delighted by an invitation from THAT MAN. And so Richard, finding that, as the thing got talked of, the Dean's lady, and Mrs Pompley, and various other great personages, took the liberty to suggest that Squire this, and Sir Somebody that, would be *so* pleased if they were asked, fairly took the bull by the horns, and sent out his cards to Park, Hall, and Rectory, within a circumference of twelve miles. He met with but few refusals, and he now counted upon five hundred guests.

"In for a penny, in for a pound," said Mr Richard Avenel. "I wonder what Mrs M'Catchley *will* say?" Indeed, if the whole truth must be known, Mr Richard Avenel not only gave that *déjeuné dansant* in honour of Mrs M'Catchley, but he had fixed in his heart of hearts upon that occasion, (when surrounded by all his splendour, and assisted by the seductive arts of Terpsichore and Bacchus,) to whisper to Mrs M'Catchley those soft words which—but why not here let Mr Richard Avenel use his own idiomatic and unsophisticated expression? "Please the pigs, then," said Mr Avenel to himself, "I shall pop the question!"

CHAPTER XVII.

The Great Day arrived at last; and Mr Richard Avenel, from his dressing-room window, looked on the scene below as Hannibal or Napoleon looked from the Alps on Italy. It was a scene to gratify the thought of conquest, and reward the labours of ambition. Placed on a little eminence stood the singers from the mountains of the Tyrol, their high-crowned hats and filigree buttons and gay sashes gleaming in the sun. Just seen from his place of watch, though concealed from the casual eye, the Hungarian musicians lay in ambush amidst a little belt of laurels and American shrubs. Far to the right lay what had once been called (*horresco referens*) the duckpond, where—*Dulce sonant tenui gutture carmen aves.* But the ruthless ingenuity of the head-artificer had converted the duckpond into a Swiss lake, despite grievous wrong and sorrow to the *assuetum innocuumque genus*—the familiar and harmless habitants, who had been all expatriated and banished from their native waves. Large poles twisted with fir branches, stuck thickly around the lake, gave to the waters the becoming Helvetian gloom. And here, beside three cows all bedecked with ribbons, stood the Swiss maidens destined to startle the shades with the *Ranz des Vaches.* To the left, full upon the sward, which it almost entirely covered, stretched the great Gothic marquee, divided into two grand sections—one for the *dancing*, one for the *déjeuné.*

The day was propitious—not a cloud in the sky. The musicians were already tuning their instruments; figures of waiters hired of Gunter—trim and decorous, in black trousers and white waistcoats, passed to and fro the space between the house and marquee. Richard looked and looked; and as he looked he

drew mechanically his razor across the strop; and when he had looked his fill, he turned reluctantly to the glass and shaved! All that blessed morning he had been too busy, till then, to think of shaving.

There is a vast deal of character in the way that a man performs that operation of shaving! You should have seen Richard Avenel shave! You could have judged at once how he would shave his neighbours, when you saw the celerity, the completeness with which he shaved himself—a forestroke and a backstroke, and *tondenti barba cadebat!* Cheek and chin were as smooth as glass. You would have buttoned up your pockets instinctively if you had seen him.

But the rest of Mr Avenel's toilet was not completed with correspondent despatch. On his bed, and on his chairs, and on his sofa, and on his drawers, lay trousers and vests and cravats enough to distract the choice of a Stoic. And first one pair of trousers was tried on, and then another—and one waistcoat, and then a second, and then a third. Gradually that *chef-d'œuvre* of Civilisation—a *man dressed*—grew into development and form; and, finally, Mr Richard Avenel emerged into the light of day. He had been lucky in his costume—he felt it. It might not suit every one in colour or cut, but it suited him.

And this was his garb. On such occasions, what epic poet would not describe the robe and tunic of a hero?

His surtout—in modern phrase, his frockcoat—was blue, a rich blue, a blue that the royal brothers of George the Fourth were wont to favour. And the surtout, single-breasted, was thrown open gallantly; and in the second button-hole thereof was a moss-rose. The vest was white, and the trousers a pearl-grey, with what tailors style "a handsome fall over the boot." A blue and white silk cravat, tied loose and debonair; an ample field of shirt front, with plain gold studs; a pair of lemon-coloured kid gloves, and a white hat, placed somewhat too knowingly on one side, complete the description, and "give the world assurance of the man." And, with his light, firm, well-shaped figure, his clear complexion, his keen bright eye, and features that bespoke the courage, precision, and alertness of his character—that is to say, features bold, not large, well-

defined, and regular—you might walk long through town or country before you would see a handsomer specimen of humanity than our friend Richard Avenel.

Handsome, and feeling that he was handsome; rich, and feeling that he was rich; lord of the fête, and feeling that he was lord of the fête, Richard Avenel stepped out upon his lawn.

And now the dust began to rise along the road, and carriages, and gigs, and chaises, and flies, might be seen at near intervals and in quick procession. People came pretty much about the same time—as they do in the country—heaven reward them for it!

Richard Avenel was not quite at his ease at first in receiving his guests, especially those whom he did not know by sight. But when the dancing began, and he had secured the fair hand of Mrs M'Catchley for the initiatory quadrille, his courage and presence of mind returned to him; and, seeing that many people whom he had not received at all seemed to enjoy themselves very much, he gave up the attempt to receive those who came after,—and that was a great relief to all parties.

Meanwhile Leonard looked on the animated scene with a silent melancholy, which he in vain endeavoured to shake off—a melancholy more common amongst very young men in such scenes than we are apt to suppose. Somehow or other the pleasure was not congenial to him: he had no Mrs M'Catchley to endear it—he knew very few people—he was shy—he felt his position with his uncle was equivocal—he had not the habit of society—he heard incidentally many an ill-natured remark upon his uncle and the entertainment—he felt indignant and mortified. He had been a great deal happier eating his radishes, and reading his book by the little fountain in Riccabocca's garden. He retired to a quiet part of the grounds, seated himself under a tree, leant his cheek on his hand, and mused. He was soon far away;—happy age, when, whatever the present, the future seems so fair and so infinite!

But now the *déjeuné* had succeeded the earlier dances; and, as champagne flowed royally, it is astonishing how the entertainment brightened.

The sun was beginning to slope towards the west, when,

during a temporary cessation of the dance, all the guests had assembled in such space as the tent left on the lawn, or thickly filled the walks immediately adjoining it. The gay dresses of the ladies, the joyous laughter heard everywhere, and the brilliant sunlight over all, conveyed even to Leonard the notion, not of mere hypocritical pleasure, but actual healthful happiness. He was attracted from his reverie, and timidly mingled with the groups. But Richard Avenel, with the fair Mrs M'Catchley —her complexion more vivid, and her eyes more dazzling, and her step more elastic than usual—had turned from the gaiety just as Leonard had turned towards it, and was now on the very spot (remote, obscure, shaded by the few trees above five years old that Mr Avenel's property boasted) which the young dreamer had deserted.

And then! Ah then! moment so meet for the sweet question of questions, place so appropriate for the delicate, bashful, murmured popping thereof!—suddenly from the sward before, from the groups beyond, there floated to the ears of Richard Avenel an indescribable mingled ominous sound—a sound as of a general titter—a horrid, malignant, but low cacchination. And Mrs M'Catchley, stretching forth her parasol, exclaimed, "Dear me, Mr Avenel, what can they be all crowding there for?"

There are certain sounds and certain sights—the one indistinct, the other vaguely conjecturable—which nevertheless, we know, by an instinct, bode some diabolical agency at work in our affairs. And if any man gives an entertainment, and hears afar a general ill-suppressed derisive titter, and sees all his guests hurrying towards one spot, I defy him to remain unmoved and uninquisitive. I defy him still more to take that precise occasion (however much he may have before designed it) to drop gracefully on his right knee before the handsomest Mrs M'Catchley in the universe, and—pop the question! Richard Avenel blurted out something very like an oath; and, half guessing that something must have happened that it would not be pleasing to bring immediately under the notice of Mrs M'Catchley, he said hastily—"Excuse me. I'll just go and see what is the matter—pray, stay till I come back." With that he sprang forward; in a minute he was in the midst of the group,

that parted aside with the most obliging complacency to make way for him.

"But what's the matter?" he asked impatiently, yet fearfully. Not a voice answered. He strode on, and beheld his nephew in the arms of a woman!

"God bless my soul!" said Richard Avenel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

And such a woman!

She had on a cotton gown—very neat, I dare say—for an under housemaid: and *such* thick shoes! She had on a little black straw bonnet; and a kerchief, that might have cost tenpence, pinned across her waist instead of a shawl; and she looked altogether—respectable, no doubt, but exceedingly dusty! And she was hanging upon Leonard's neck, and scolding, and caressing, and crying very loud. "God bless my soul!" said Mr Richard Avenel.

And as he uttered that innocent self-benediction, the woman hastily turned round, and, darting from Leonard, threw herself right upon Richard Avenel—burying under her embrace blue-coat, moss-rose, white waistcoat and all—with a vehement sob and a loud exclamation!

"Oh! brother Dick!—dear, dear brother Dick! and I lives to see thee agin!" And then came two such kisses—you might have heard them a mile off! The situation of brother Dick was appalling; and the crowd, that had before only tittered politely, could not now resist the effect of this sudden embrace. There was a general explosion!—It was a roar! That roar would have killed a weak man; but it sounded to the strong heart of Richard Avenel like the defiance of a foe, and it plucked forth in an instant from all conventional let and barrier the native spirit of the Anglo-Saxon.

He lifted abruptly his handsome masculine head, and looked round the ring of his ill-bred visitors with a haughty stare of rebuke and surprise.

"Ladies and gentlemen," then said he very coolly, "I don't

see what there is to laugh at! A brother and sister meet after many years' separation, and the sister cries, poor thing. For my part, I think it very natural that *she* should cry; but not that you should laugh!" In an instant the whole shame was removed from Richard Avenel, and rested in full weight upon the bystanders. It is impossible to say how foolish and sheepish they all looked, nor how slinkingly each tried to creep off.

Richard Avenel seized his advantage with the promptitude of a man who had got on in America, and was therefore accustomed to make the best of things. He drew Mrs Fairfield's arm in his, and led her into the house; but when he had got her safe into his parlour—Leonard following all the time—and the door was closed upon those three, *then* Richard Avenel's ire burst forth.

"You impudent, ungrateful, audacious—drab!"

Yes, drab was the word. I am shocked to say it, but the duties of a historian are stern: and the word *was* drab.

"Drab!" faltered poor Jane Fairfield; and she clutched hold of Leonard, to save herself from falling.

"Sir!" cried Leonard fiercely.

You might as well have cried "sir" to a mountain torrent. Richard hurried on, for he was furious.

"You nasty, dirty, dusty dowdy! How dare you come here to disgrace me in my own house and premises, after my sending you fifty pounds. To take the very time, too, when—when"—

Richard gasped for breath; and the laugh of his guests rang in his ears, and got into his chest, and choked him. Jane Fairfield drew herself up, and her tears were dried.

"I did not come to disgrace you; I came to see my boy, and"—

"Ha!" interrupted Richard, "to see *him*."

He turned to Leonard: "You have written to this woman, then?"

"No, sir, I have not."

"I believe you lie."

"He does not lie; and he is as good as yourself, and better, Richard Avenel," exclaimed Mrs Fairfield; "and I won't stand here and hear him insulted—that's what I won't. And as for your fifty pounds, there are forty-five of it; and I'll work my

fingers to the bone till I pay back the other five. And don't be afeard I shall disgrace you, for I'll never look on your face agin; and you're a wicked bad man—that's what you are."

The poor woman's voice was so raised, and so shrill, that any other and more remorseful feeling which Richard might have conceived was drowned in his apprehension that she would be overheard by his servants or his guests—a masculine apprehension, with which females rarely sympathise; which, on the contrary, they are inclined to consider a mean and cowardly terror on the part of their male oppressors.

"Hush! hold your infernal squall—do!" said Mr Avenel in a tone that he meant to be soothing. "There—sit down—and don't stir till I come back again, and can talk to you calmly. Leonard, follow me, and help to explain things to our guests."

Leonard stood still, but shook his head slightly.

"What do you mean, sir?" said Richard Avenel, in a very portentous growl. "Shaking your head at me? Do you intend to disobey me? You had better take care!"

Leonard's front rose; he drew one arm round his mother, and thus he spoke:—

"Sir, you have been kind to me, and generous, and that thought alone silenced my indignation, when I heard you address such language to my mother; for I felt that, if I spoke, I should say too much. Now I speak, and it is to say shortly that"—

"Hush, boy," said poor Mrs Fairfield, frightened; "don't mind me. I did not come to make mischief, and ruin your prospex. I'll go!"

"Will you ask her pardon, Mr Avenel?" said Leonard, firmly; and he advanced towards his uncle.

Richard, naturally hot and intolerant of contradiction, was then excited, not only by the angry emotions which, it must be owned, a man so mortified, and in the very flush of triumph, might well experience, but by much more wine than he was in the habit of drinking; and when Leonard approached him, he misinterpreted the movement into one of menace and aggression. He lifted his arm: "Come a step nearer," said he, between his teeth, "and I'll knock you down." Leonard

advanced that forbidden step; but as Richard caught his eye, there was something in that eye—not defying, not threatening, but bold and dauntless—which Richard recognised and respected, for that something spoke the Freeman. The uncle's arm mechanically fell to his side.

"You cannot strike me, Mr Avenel," said Leonard, "for you are aware that I could not strike again my mother's brother. As her son, I once more say to you,—ask her pardon."

"Ten thousand devils! Are you mad?—or do you want to drive me mad? you insolent beggar, fed and clothed by my charity. Ask her pardon!—what for? That she has made me the object of jeer and ridicule with that d—d cotton gown, and those double-d—d thick shoes. I vow and protest they've got nails in them! Hark ye, sir, I've been insulted by her, but I'm not to be bullied by you. Come with me instantly, or I discard you; not a shilling of mine shall you have as long as I live. Take your choice—be a peasant, a labourer, or"—

"A base renegade to natural affection, a degraded beggar indeed!" cried Leonard, his breast heaving, and his cheeks in a glow. "Mother, mother, come away. Never fear—I have strength and youth, and we will work together as before."

But poor Mrs Fairfield, overcome by her excitement, had sunk down into Richard's own handsome morocco leather easy-chair, and could neither speak nor stir.

"Confound you both!" muttered Richard. "You can't be seen creeping out of my house now. Keep her here, you young viper, you; keep her till I come back; and then if you choose to go, go and be"—

Not finishing his sentence, Mr Avenel hurried out of the room, and locked the door, putting the key into his pocket. He paused for a moment in the hall, in order to collect his thoughts—drew three or four deep breaths—gave himself a great shake—and, resolved to be faithful to his principle of doing one thing at a time, shook off in that shake all disturbing recollection of his mutinous captives. Stern as Achilles when he appeared to the Trojans, Richard Avenel stalked back to his lawn.

CHAPTER XIX.

BRIEF as had been his absence, the host could see that, in the interval, a great and notable change had come over the spirit of his company. Some of those who lived in the town were evidently preparing to return home on foot; those who lived at a distance, and whose carriages (having been sent away, and ordered to return at a fixed hour) had not yet arrived, were gathered together in small knots and groups; all looked sullen and displeased, and all instinctively turned from their host as he passed them by. They felt they had been lectured, and they were more put out than Richard himself. They did not know if they might not be lectured again. This vulgar man, of what might he not be capable?

Richard's shrewd sense comprehended in an instant all the difficulties of his position; but he walked on deliberately and directly towards Mrs M'Catchley, who was standing near the grand marquee with the Pompleys and the Dean's lady. As these personages saw him make thus boldy towards them, there was a flutter. "Hang the fellow!" said the Colonel, intrenching himself in his stock, "he is coming here. Low and shocking—what shall we do? Let us stroll on."

But Richard threw himself in the way of the retreat.

"Mrs M'Catchley," said he very gravely, and offering her his arm, "allow me three words with you."

The poor widow looked very much discomposed. Mrs Pompley pulled her by the sleeve. Richard still stood gazing into her face, with his arm extended. She hesitated a minute, and then took the arm.

"Monstrous impudent!" cried the Colonel.

"Let Mrs M'Catchley alone, my dear," responded Mrs Pompley; "*she* will know how to give him a lesson!"

"Madam," said Richard, as soon as he and his companion were out of hearing, "I rely on you to do me a favour."

"On me?"

"On you, and you alone. You have influence with all those people, and a word from you will effect what I desire. Mrs M'Catchley," added Richard, with a solemnity that was actually imposing, "I flatter myself that you have some friendship for me, which is more than I can say of any other soul in these grounds—will you do me this favour, ay or no?"

"What is it, Mr Avenel?" asked Mrs M'Catchley, much disturbed, and somewhat softened—for she was by no means a woman without feeling; indeed, she considered herself nervous.

"Get all your friends—all the company, in short—to come back into the tent for refreshments—for anything. I want to say a few words to them."

"Bless me! Mr Avenel—a few words!" cried the widow, "but that's just what they are all afraid of! You must pardon me, but you really can't ask people to a *déjeuné dansant*, and then—scold 'em!"

"I'm not going to scold them," said Mr Avenel, very seriously —"upon my honour, I'm not! I'm going to make all right, and I even hope afterwards that the dancing may go on—and that you will honour me again with your hand. I leave you to your task; and, believe me, I'm not an ungrateful man." He spoke, and bowed—not without some dignity—and vanished within the breakfast division of the marquee. There he busied himself in re-collecting the waiters, and directing them to rearrange the mangled remains of the table as they best could. Mrs M'Catchley, whose curiosity and interest were aroused, executed her commission with all the ability and tact of a woman of the world, and in less than a quarter of an hour the marquee was filled—the corks flew—the champagne bounced and sparkled—people drank in silence, munched fruits and cakes, kept up their courage with the conscious sense of numbers, and felt a great desire to know what was coming. Mr Avenel, at the head of the table, suddenly rose.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said he, "I have taken the liberty to invite you once more into this tent, in order to ask you to sympathise with me, upon an occasion which took us all a little by surprise to-day.

"Of course, you all know I am a new man—the maker of my own fortunes."

A great many heads bowed involuntarily. The words were said manfully, and there was a general feeling of respect.

"Probably, too," resumed Mr Avenel, "you may know that I am the son of very honest tradespeople. I say honest, and they are not ashamed of me—I say tradespeople, and I'm not ashamed of them. My sister married and settled at a distance. I took her son to educate and bring up. But I did not tell her where he was, nor even that I had returned from America—I wished to choose my own time for that, when I could give her the surprise, not only of a rich brother, but of a son whom I intended to make a gentleman, so far as manners and education can make one. Well, the poor dear woman has found me out sooner than I expected, and turned the tables on me by giving me a surprise of her own invention. Pray, forgive the confusion this little family scene has created; and though I own it was very laughable at the moment, and I was wrong to say otherwise, yet I am sure I don't judge ill of your good hearts when I ask you to think what brother and sister must feel who parted from each other when they were boy and girl. To me (and Richard gave a great gulp—for he felt that a great gulp alone could swallow the abominable lie he was about to utter) —to me this has been *a very happy occasion!* I'm a plain man: no one can take ill what I've said. And, wishing that you may be all as happy in your family as I am in mine—humble though it be—I beg to drink your very good healths!"

There was a universal applause when Richard sate down; and so well in his plain way had he looked the thing, and done the thing, that at least half of those present—who till then had certainly disliked and half despised him—suddenly felt that they were proud of his acquaintance. For however aristocratic this country of ours may be, and however especially aristocratic be the genteeler classes in provincial towns

and coteries—there is nothing which English folks, from the highest to the lowest, in their hearts so respect as a man who has risen from nothing, and owns it frankly! Sir Compton Delaval, an old baronet, with a pedigree as long as a Welshman's, who had been reluctantly decoyed to the feast by his three unmarried daughters—not one of whom, however, had hitherto condescended even to bow to the host—now rose. It was his right—he was the first person there in rank and station.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," quoth Sir Compton Delaval, "I am sure that I express the feelings of all present when I say that we have heard with great delight and admiration the words addressed to us by our excellent host. (Applause.) And if any of us, in what Mr Avenel describes justly as the surprise of the moment, were betrayed into an unseemly merriment at —at—(the Dean's lady whispered 'some of the')—some of the —some of the"—repeated Sir Compton, puzzled, and coming to a dead lock—('holiest sentiments,' whispered the Dean's lady)—"ay, some of the holiest sentiments in our nature—I beg him to accept our sincerest apologies. I can only say, for my part, that I am proud to rank Mr Avenel amongst the gentlemen of the county, (here Sir Compton gave a sounding thump on the table,) and to thank him for one of the most brilliant entertainments it has ever been my lot to witness. If he won his fortune honestly, he knows how to spend it nobly!"

Whiz went a fresh bottle of champagne.

"I am not accustomed to public speaking, but I could not repress my sentiments. And I've now only to propose to you the health of our host, Richard Avenel, Esquire; and to couple with that the health of his—very interesting sister, and long life to them both!"

The sentence was half drowned in enthusiastic plaudits, and in three cheers for Richard Avenel, Esquire, and his very interesting sister.

"I'm a cursed humbug," thought Richard Avenel, as he wiped his forehead; "but the world *is* such a humbug!"

Then he glanced towards Mrs M'Catchley, and, to his great satisfaction, saw Mrs M'Catchley with her handkerchief before her eyes.

Now, though the fair widow might certainly have contemplated the probability of accepting Mr Avenel as a husband, she had never before felt the least bit in love with him; and now she did. There is something in courage and candour—at a word, in manliness—that all women, the most worldly, do admire in men; and Richard Avenel, humbug though his conscience said he was, seemed to Mrs M'Catchley like a hero.

The host saw his triumph. "Now for another dance!" said he gaily; and he was about to offer his hand to Mrs M'Catchley, when Sir Compton Delaval, seizing it, and giving it a hearty shake, cried, "You have not yet danced with my eldest daughter; so, if you'll not ask her, why, I must offer her to you as your partner. Here—Sarah."

Miss Sarah Delaval, who was five feet eight, and as stately as she was tall, bowed her head graciously; and Mr Avenel, before he knew where he was, found her leaning on his arm. But as he passed into the next division of the tent, he had to run the gauntlet of all the gentlemen, who thronged round to shake hands with him. Their warm English hearts could not be satisfied till they had so repaired the sin of their previous haughtiness and mockery. Richard Avenel might then have safely introduced his sister—gown, kerchief, thick shoes and all—to the crowd; but he had no such thought. He thanked heaven devoutly that she was safely under lock and key.

It was not till the third dance that he could secure Mrs M'Catchley's hand, and then it was twilight. The carriages were at the door, but no one yet thought of going. People were really enjoying themselves. Mr Avenel had had time, in the interim, to mature all his plans for completing and consummating that triumph which his tact and pluck had drawn from his momentary disgrace. Excited as he was with wine and suppressed passion, he had yet the sense to feel that, when all the halo that now surrounded him had evaporated, and Mrs M'Catchley was redelivered up to the Pompleys, whom he felt to be the last persons his interest could desire for her advisers—the thought of his low relations would return with calm reflection. Now was the time. The iron was hot—now was the time to strike it, and forge the enduring chain.

As he led Mrs M'Catchley after the dance, into the lawn, he therefore said tenderly—

"How shall I thank you for the favour you have done me?"

"Oh!" said Mrs M'Catchley warmly, "it was no favour—and I am so glad"—She stopped.

"You're not ashamed of me, then, in spite of what has happened?"

"Ashamed of you! Why, I should be so proud of you, if I were—"

"Finish the sentence, and say—'your wife!'—there it is out. My dear madam, I am rich, as you know; I love you very heartily. With your help, I think I can make a figure in a larger world than this; and that whatever my father, my grandson at least will be—But it is time enough to speak of *him*. What say you?—you turn away. I'll not tease you—it is not my way. I said before, ay or no; and your kindness so emboldens me that I say it again—ay or no?"

"But you take me so unawares—so—so—Lord, my dear Mr Avenel; you are so hasty—I—I—." And the widow actually blushed, and was genuinely bashful.

"Those horrid Pompleys!" thought Richard, as he saw the Colonel bustling up with Mrs M'Catchley's cloak on his arm.

"I press for your answer," continued the suitor, speaking very fast. "I shall leave this place to-morrow, if you will not give it."

"Leave this place—leave me?"

"Then you will be mine!"

"Ah, Mr Avenel!" said the widow, languidly, and leaving her hand in his; "who can resist you?"

Up came Colonel Pompley; Richard took the shawl: "No hurry for that now, Colonel—Mrs M'Catchley feels already at home here."

Ten minutes afterwards, Richard Avenel so contrived that it was known by the whole company that their host was accepted by the Honourable Mrs M'Catchley. And every one said, "He is a very clever man, and a very good fellow," except the Pompleys—and the Pompleys were frantic. Mr Richard Avenel

had forced his way into the aristocracy of the country. The husband of an Honourable—connected with peers!

"He will stand for our city—Vulgarian!" cried the Colonel.

"And his wife will walk out before me," cried the Colonel's lady—"nasty woman!" And she burst into tears.

The guests were gone; and Richard had now leisure to consider what course to pursue with regard to his sister and her son.

His victory over his guests had in much softened his heart towards his relations; but he still felt bitterly aggrieved at Mrs Fairfield's unseasonable intrusion, and his pride was greatly chafed by the boldness of Leonard. He had no idea of any man whom he had served, or meant to serve, having a will of his own—having a single thought in opposition to his pleasure. He began, too, to feel that words had passed between him and Leonard which could not be well forgotten by either, and would render their close connection less pleasant than heretofore. He, the great Richard Avenel, beg pardon of Mrs Fairfield, the washerwoman! No; she and Leonard must beg his. "That must be the first step," said Richard Avenel; "and I suppose they have come to their senses." With that expectation, he unlocked the door of his parlour, and found himself in complete solitude. The moon, lately risen, shone full into the room, and lit up every corner. He stared round, bewildered—the birds had flown. "Did they go through the key-hole?" said Mr Avenel. "Ha! I see!—the window is open!" The window reached to the ground. Mr Avenel, in his excitement, had forgotten that easy mode of egress.

"Well," said he, throwing himself into his easy-chair, "I suppose I shall soon hear from them; they'll be wanting my money fast enough, I fancy." His eye caught sight of a letter, unsealed, lying on the table. He opened it, and saw bank-notes to the amount of £50—the widow's forty-five country notes, and a new note, Bank of England, that he had lately given to Leonard. With the money were these lines, written in Leonard's bold, clear, writing, though a word or two here and there showed that the hand had trembled—

"I thank you for all you have done to one whom you regarded as the object of charity. My mother and I forgive what has passed. I depart with her. You bade me make my choice, and I have made it.

"LEONARD FAIRFIELD."

The paper dropped from Richard's hand, and he remained mute and remorseful for a moment. He soon felt, however, that he had no help for it but working himself up into a rage. "Of all people in the world," cried Richard, stamping his foot on the floor, "there are none so disagreeable, insolent, and ungrateful as poor relations. I wash my hands of them!"

BOOK SIXTH

BOOK SIXTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

WHEREIN MR CAXTON IS PROFOUNDLY METAPHYSICAL.

"LIFE," said my father, in his most dogmatical tone, "is a certain quantity in time, which may be regarded in two ways—1st, as life *Integral;* 2d, as life *Fractional.* Life integral is that complete whole, expressive of a certain value, large or small, which each man possesses in himself. Life fractional is that same whole seized upon and invaded by other people, and subdivided amongst them. They who get a large slice of it say, 'A very valuable life this!'—those who get but a small handful say, 'So so; nothing very great!'—those who get none of it in the scramble exclaim, 'Good for nothing!'"

"I don't understand a word you are saying," growled Captain Roland.

My father surveyed his brother with compassion—"I will make it all clear even to your understanding. When I sit down by myself in my study, having carefully locked the door on all of you, alone with my books and thoughts, I am in full possession of my integral life. I am *totus, teres, atque rotundus*—a whole human being—equivalent in value, we will say, for the sake of illustration, to a fixed round sum—£100, for ex-

ample. But when I go forth into the common apartment, each of those to whom I am of any worth whatsoever puts his fingers into the bag that contains me, and takes out of me what he wants. Kitty requires me to pay a bill; Pisistratus to save him the time and trouble of looking into a score or two of books; the children to tell them stories, or play at hide-and-seek; and so on throughout the circle to which I have incautiously given myself up for plunder and subdivision. The £100 which I represented in my study is now parcelled out; I am worth £40 or £50 to Kitty, £20 to Pisistratus, and perhaps 30s. to the children. This is life fractional. And I cease to be an integral till once more returning to my study, and again closing the door on all existence but my own. Meanwhile, it is perfectly clear that, to those who, whether I am in the study, or whether I am in the common sitting-room, get nothing at all out of me, I am not worth a farthing. It must be wholly indifferent to a native of Kamschatka whether Austin Caxton be or be not rased out of the great account-book of human beings.

"Hence," continued my father—"hence it follows that the more fractional a life be—*id est*, the greater the number of persons among whom it can be subdivided—why, the more there are to say, 'A very valuable life that!'" Thus, the leader of a political party, a conqueror, a king, an author who is amusing hundreds or thousands, or millions, has a greater number of persons whom his worth interests and affects than a Saint Simon Stylites could have when he perched himself at the top of a column; although, regarded each in himself, Saint Simon, in his grand mortification of flesh, in the idea that he thereby pleased his Divine Benefactor, might represent a larger sum of moral value *per se* than Buonaparte or Voltaire."

PISISTRATUS.—"Perfectly clear, sir; but I don't see what it has to do with My Novel."

MR CAXTON.—"Everything. Your novel, if it is to be a full and comprehensive survey of the '*Quicquid agunt homines*,' (which it ought to be, considering the length and breadth to which I foresee, from the slow development of your story, you meditate extending and expanding it,) will embrace the two

views of existence—the integral and the fractional. You have shown us the former in Leonard, when he is sitting in his mother's cottage, or resting from his work by the little fount in Riccabocca's garden. And in harmony with that view of his life, you have surrounded him with comparative integrals, only subdivided by the tender hands of their immediate families and neighbours—your Squires and Parsons, your Italian Exile and his Jemima. With all these, life is more or less the life Natural, and this is always more or less the life Integral. Then comes the life Artificial, which is always more or less the life Fractional. In the life Natural, wherein we are swayed but by our own native impulses and desires, subservient only to the great silent law of Virtue, (which has pervaded the universe since it swung out of chaos,) a man is of worth from what he is in himself—Newton was as worthy before the apple fell from the tree as when all Europe applauded the discoverer of the Principle of Gravity. But in the life Artificial we are only of worth inasmuch as we affect others. And, relative to that life, Newton rose in value more than a million per cent when down fell the apple from which ultimately sprang up his discovery. In order to keep civilisation going, and spread over the world the light of human intellect, we have certain desires within us, ever swelling beyond the ease and independence which belong to us as integrals. Cold man as Newton might be, (he once took a lady's hand in his own, Kitty, and used her fore-finger for his tobacco-stopper :—great philosopher !) — cold as he might be, he was yet moved into giving his discoveries to the world, and that from motives very little differing in their quality from the motives that make Dr Squills communicate articles to the Phrenological Journal upon the skulls of Bushmen and wombats. For it is the *property of light to travel.* When a man has light in him forth it must go. But the first passage of Genius from its integral state (in which it has been reposing on its own wealth) into the fractional, is usually through a hard and vulgar pathway. It leaves behind it the reveries of solitude, that self-contemplating rest which may be called the Visionary, and enters suddenly into the state that may be called the Positive and Actual. There, it sees the operations of

money on the outer life—sees all the ruder and commoner springs of action—sees ambition without nobleness—love without romance—is bustled about, and ordered, and trampled, and cowed—in short, it passes an apprenticeship with some Richard Avenel, and does not yet detect what good and what grandeur, what addition even to the true poetry of the social universe, fractional existences like Richard Avenel's bestow; for the pillars that support society are like those of the Court of the Hebrew Tabernacle—they are of brass, it is true, but they are filleted with silver. From such intermediate state Genius is expelled and driven on in its way, and would have been so in this case had Mrs Fairfield (who is but the representative of the homely natural affections, strongest ever in true genius—for light is warm) never crushed Mr Avenel's moss-rose on her sisterly bosom. Now, forth from this passage and defile of transition into the larger world, must Genius go on, working out its natural destiny amidst things and forms the most artificial. Passions that move and influence the world are at work around it. Often lost sight of itself, its very absence is a silent contrast to the agencies present. Merged and vanished for a while amidst the Practical World, yet we ourselves feel all the while that it is *there;* is at work amidst the workings around it. This practical world that effaces it, rose out of some genius that has gone before; and so each man of genius, though we never come across him, as his operations proceed, in places remote from our thoroughfares, is yet influencing the practical world that ignores him, for ever and ever. That is GENIUS! We can't describe it in books—we can only hint and suggest it, by the accessaries which we artfully heap about it. The entrance of a true Probationer into the terrible ordeal of Practical Life is like that into the miraculous cavern, by which, legend informs us, St Patrick converted Ireland."

BLANCHE.—"What is that legend? I never heard of it."

MR CAXTON.—"My dear, you will find it in a thin folio at the right on entering my study, written by Thomas Messingham, and called "Florilegium Insulæ Sanctorum," &c. The account therein is confirmed by the relation of an honest soldier, one Louis Ennius, who had actually entered the cavern.

In short, the truth of the legend is undeniable, unless you mean to say, which I can't for a moment suppose, that Louis Ennius was a liar. Thus it runs: St Patrick, finding that the Irish pagans were incredulous as to his pathetic assurances of the pains and torments destined to those who did not expiate their sins in this world, prayed for a miracle to convince them. His prayer was heard; and a certain cavern, so small that a man could not stand up therein at his ease, was suddenly converted into a Purgatory, comprehending tortures sufficient to convince the most incredulous. One unacquainted with human nature might conjecture that few would be disposed to venture voluntarily into such a place;—on the contrary, pilgrims came in crowds. Now, all who entered from vain curiosity, or with souls unprepared, perished miserably; but those who entered with deep and earnest faith, conscious of their faults, and if bold, yet humble, not only came out safe and sound, but purified, as if from the waters of a second baptism. See Savage and Johnson, at night in Fleet Street;—and who shall doubt the truth of St Patrick's Purgatory!" Therewith my father sighed —closed his Lucian, which had lain open on the table, and would read none but "good books" for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER II.

On their escape from the prison to which Mr Avenel had condemned them, Leonard and his mother found their way to a small public-house that lay at a little distance from the town, and on the outskirts of the high-road. With his arm round his mother's waist, Leonard supported her steps, and soothed her excitement. In fact, the poor woman's nerves were greatly shaken, and she felt an uneasy remorse at the injury her intrusion had inflicted on the young man's worldly prospects. As the shrewd reader has guessed already, that infamous Tinker was the prime agent of evil in this critical turn in the affairs of his quondam customer. For, on his return to his haunts around Hazeldean and the Casino, the Tinker had hastened to apprise Mrs Fairfield of his interview with Leonard, and, on finding that she was not aware that the boy was under the roof of his uncle, the pestilent vagabond (perhaps from spite against Mr Avenel, or perhaps from that pure love of mischief by which metaphysical critics explain the character of Iago, and which certainly formed a main element in the idiosyncrasy of Mr Sprott) had so impressed on the widow's mind the haughty demeanour of the uncle and the refined costume of the nephew, that Mrs Fairfield had been seized with a bitter and insupportable jealousy. There was an intention to rob her of her boy!—he was to be made too fine for her. His silence was now accounted for. This sort of jealousy, always more or less a feminine quality, is often very strong amongst the poor; and it was the more strong in Mrs Fairfield, because, lone woman that she was, the boy was all in all to her. And though she was reconciled to the loss of his presence, nothing could reconcile her to

the thought that his affections should be weaned from her. Moreover, there were in her mind certain impressions, of the justice of which the reader may better judge hereafter, as to the gratitude—more than ordinarily filial—which Leonard owed to her. In short, she did not like, as she phrased it, "to be shaken off;" and after a sleepless night she resolved to judge for herself, much moved thereto by the malicious suggestions to that effect made by Mr Sprott, who mightily enjoyed the idea of mortifying the gentleman by whom he had been so disrespectfully threatened with the treadmill. The widow felt angry with Parson Dale, and with the Riccaboccas: she thought they were in the plot against her; she communicated, therefore, her intentions to none—and off she set, performing the journey partly on the top of the coach, partly on foot. No wonder that she was dusty, poor woman.

"And, oh boy!" said she, half sobbing, "when I got through the lodge-gates, came on the lawn, and saw all that power o' fine folk—I said to myself, says I—(for I felt fritted)—I'll just have a look at him and go back. But ah, Lenny, when I saw thee, looking so handsome—and when thee turned and cried 'Mother,' my heart was just ready to leap out o' my mouth—and so I could not help hugging thee, if I had died for it. And thou wert so kind, that I forgot all Mr Sprott had said about Dick's pride, or thought he had just told a fib about that, as he had wanted me to believe a fib about thee. Then Dick came up—and I had not seen him for so many years—and we come o' the same father and mother; and so—and so—" The widow's sobs here fairly choked her. "Ah," she said, after giving vent to her passion, and throwing her arms round Leonard's neck, as they sate in the little sanded parlour of the public-house—"Ah, and I've brought thee to this. Go back; go back, boy, and never mind me."

With some difficulty Leonard pacified poor Mrs Fairfield, and got her to retire to bed; for she was, indeed, thoroughly exhausted. He then stepped forth into the road, musingly. All the stars were out; and Youth, in its troubles, instinctively looks up to the stars. Folding his arms, Leonard gazed on the heavens, and his lips murmured.

From this trance, for so it might be called, he was awakened by a voice in a decidedly London accent; and, turning hastily round, saw Mr Avenel's very gentlemanlike butler. Leonard's first idea was that his uncle had repented, and sent in search of him. But the butler seemed as much surprised at the rencontre as himself: that personage, indeed, the fatigues of the day being over, was accompanying one of Mr Gunter's waiters to the public-house, (at which the latter had secured his lodging,) having discovered an old friend in the waiter, and proposing to regale himself with a cheerful glass, and — (*that* of course) — abuse of his present situation.

"Mr Fairfield!" exclaimed the butler, while the waiter walked discreetly on.

Leonard looked, and said nothing. The butler began to think that some apology was due for leaving his plate and his pantry, and that he might as well secure Leonard's propitiatory influence with his master—

"Please, sir," said he, touching his hat, "I was just a-showing Mr Giles the way to the Blue Bells, where he puts up for the night. I hope my master will not be offended. If you are a-going back, sir, would you kindly mention it?"

"I am not going back, Jarvis," answered Leonard, after a pause; "I am leaving Mr Avenel's house, to accompany my mother: rather suddenly. I should be very much obliged to you if you would bring some things of mine to me at the Blue Bells. I will give you the list, if you will step with me to the inn."

Without waiting for a reply, Leonard then turned towards the inn, and made his humble inventory;—item, the clothes he had brought with him from the Casino; item, the knapsack that had contained them; item, a few books ditto; item, Dr Riccabocca's watch; item, sundry MSS., on which the young student now built all his hopes of fame and fortune. This list he put into Mr Jarvis's hand.

"Sir," said the butler, twirling the paper between his finger and thumb, "you're not a-going for long, I hope;" and he looked on the face of the young man, who had always been "civil spoken to him," with as much curiosity and as much

compassion as so apathetic and princely a personage could experience in matters affecting a family less aristocratic than he had hitherto condescended to serve.

"Yes," said Leonard, simply and briefly; "and your master will no doubt excuse you for rendering me this service."

Mr Jarvis postponed for the present his glass and chat with the waiter, and went back at once to Mr Avenel. That gentleman, still seated in his library, had not been aware of the butler's absence; and when Mr Jarvis entered and told him that he had met Mr Fairfield, and, communicating the commission with which he was intrusted, asked leave to execute it, Mr Avenel felt the man's inquisitive eye was on him, and conceived new wrath against Leonard for a new humiliation to his pride. It was awkward to give no explanation of his nephew's departure, still more awkward to explain.

After a short pause, Mr Avenel said sullenly, "My nephew is going away on business for some time—do what he tells you;" and then turned his back, and lighted his cigar.

"That beast of a boy," said he, soliloquising, "either means this as an affront, or an overture: if an affront, he is, indeed, well got rid of; if an overture, he will soon make a more respectful and proper one. After all, I can't have too little of relations till I have fairly secured Mrs M'Catchley. An Honourable! I wonder if that makes me an Honourable too? This cursed Debrett contains no practical information on those points."

The next morning, the clothes and the watch with which Mr Avenel presented Leonard were returned, with a note meant to express gratitude, but certainly written with very little knowledge of the world, and so full of that somewhat over-resentful pride which had in earlier life made Leonard fly from Hazeldean, and refuse all apology to Randal, that it is not to be wondered at that Mr Avenel's last remorseful feelings evaporated in ire. "I hope he will starve!" said the uncle, vindictively.

CHAPTER III.

"LISTEN to me, my dear mother," said Leonard the next morning, as, with his knapsack on his shoulder and Mrs Fairfield on his arm, he walked along the high-road; "I do assure you, from my heart, that I do not regret the loss of favours which I see plainly would have crushed out of me the very sense of independence. But do not fear for me; I have education and energy—I shall do well for myself, trust me. No, I cannot, it is true, go back to our cottage—I cannot be a gardener again. Don't ask me—I should be discontented, miserable. But I will go up to London! That's the place to make a fortune and a name: I will make both. O yes, trust me, I will. You shall soon be proud of your Leonard; and then we will always live together—always! Don't cry."

"But what can you do in Lunnon—such a big place, Lenny?"

"What! Every year does not some lad leave our village, and go and seek his fortune, taking with him but health and strong hands? I have these, and I have more: I have brains, and thoughts, and hopes, that—again I say, No, no—never fear for me!"

The boy threw back his head proudly; there was something sublime in his young trust in the future.

"Well. But you will write to Mr Dale, or to me? I will get Mr Dale, or the good Mounseer (now I know they were not agin me) to read your letters."

"I will, indeed!"

"And, boy, you have nothing in your pockets. We have paid Dick; these, at least, are my own, after paying the coach

fare." And she would thrust a sovereign and some shillings into Leonard's waistcoat pocket.

After some resistance, he was forced to consent.

"And there's a sixpence with a hole in it. Don't part with that, Lenny; it will bring thee good luck."

Thus talking, they gained the inn where the three roads met, and from which a coach went direct to the Casino. And here, without entering the inn, they sate on the green sward by the hedgerow, waiting the arrival of the coach. Mrs Fairfield was much subdued in spirits, and there was evidently on her mind something uneasy—some struggle with her conscience. She not only upbraided herself for her rash visit, but she kept talking of her dead Mark. And what would he say of her, if he could see her in heaven?

"It was so selfish in me, Lenny."

"Pooh, pooh! Has not a mother a right to her child?"

"Ay, ay, ay!" cried Mrs Fairfield. "I do love you as a child—my own child. But if I was not your mother, after all, Lenny, and cost you all this—oh, what would you say of me then?"

"Not my own mother!" said Leonard, laughing, as he kissed her. "Well, I don't know what I should say then differently from what I say now—that you, who brought me up, and nursed and cherished me, had a right to my home and my heart, wherever I was."

"Bless thee!" cried Mrs Fairfield, as she pressed him to her heart. "But it weighs here—it weighs," she said, starting up.

At that instant the coach appeared, and Leonard ran forward to inquire if there was an outside place. Then there was a short bustle while the horses were being changed; and Mrs Fairfield was lifted up to the roof of the vehicle. So all farther private conversation between her and Leonard ceased. But as the coach whirled away, and she waved her hand to the boy, who stood on the road-side gazing after her, she still murmured—"It weighs here—it weighs!"

CHAPTER IV.

LEONARD walked sturdily on in the high-road to the Great City. The day was calm and sunlit, but with a gentle breeze from grey hills at the distance; and with each mile that he passed, his step seemed to grow more firm, and his front more elate. Oh! it is such joy in youth to be alone with one's day-dreams. And youth feels so glorious a vigour in the sense of its own strength, though the world be before and—against it! Removed from that chilling counting-house—from the imperious will of a patron and master—all friendless, but all independent—the young adventurer felt a new being—felt his grand nature as Man. And on the Man rushed the genius long interdicted—and thrust aside—rushing back, with the first breath of adversity, to console—no! the Man needed not consolation,—to kindle, to animate, to rejoice! If there is a being in the world worthy of our envy, after we have grown wise philosophers of the fireside, it is not the palled voluptuary, nor the care-worn statesman, nor even the great prince of arts and letters, already crowned with the laurel, whose leaves are as fit for poison as for garlands; it is the young child of adventure and hope. Ay, and the emptier his purse, ten to one but the richer his heart, and the wider the domains which his fancy enjoys as he goes on with kingly step to the Future.

Not till towards the evening did our adventurer slacken his pace, and think of rest and refreshment. There, then, lay before him, on either side the road, those wide patches of unenclosed land, which in England often denote the entrance to a village. Presently one or two neat cottages came in sight—then a small farmhouse, with its yard and barns. And someway farther

yet, he saw the sign swinging before an inn of some pretensions — the sort of inn often found on a long stage between two great towns, commonly called "The Half-way House." But the inn stood back from the road, having its own separate sward in front, whereon was a great beech-tree (from which the sign extended) and a rustic arbour—so that, to gain the inn, the coaches that stopped there took a sweep from the main thoroughfare. Between our pedestrian and the inn there stood naked and alone, on the common land, a church; our ancestors never would have chosen that site for it; therefore it was a modern church—modern Gothic—handsome to an eye not versed in the attributes of ecclesiastical architecture—very barbarous to an eye that was. Somehow or other the church looked cold and raw and uninviting. It looked a church for show — much too big for the scattered hamlet — and void of all the venerable associations which give their peculiar and unspeakable atmosphere of piety to the churches in which succeeding generations have knelt and worshipped. Leonard paused and surveyed the edifice with an unlearned but poetical gaze—it dissatisfied him. And he was yet pondering why, when a young girl passed slowly before him, her eyes fixed on the ground, opened the little gate that led into the churchyard, and vanished. He did not see the child's face; but there was something in her movements so utterly listless, forlorn, and sad, that his heart was touched. What did she there? He approached the low wall with a noiseless step, and looked over it wistfully.

There, by a grave evidently quite recent, with no wooden tomb nor tombstone like the rest, the little girl had thrown herself, and she was sobbing loud and passionately. Leonard opened the gate, and approached her with a soft step. Mingled with her sobs, he heard broken sentences, wild and vain, as all human sorrowings over graves must be.

"Father!—oh, father! do you not really hear me? I am so lone—so lone! Take me to you—take me!" And she buried her face in the deep grass.

"Poor child!" said Leonard, in a half whisper—"he is not there. Look above!"

The girl did not heed him—he put his arm round her waist gently—she made a gesture of impatience and anger, but she would not turn her face—and she clung to the grave with her hands.

After clear sunny days the dews fall more heavily; and now, as the sun set, the herbage was bathed in a vaporous haze—a dim mist rose around. The young man seated himself beside her, and tried to draw the child to his breast. Then she turned eagerly, indignantly, and pushed him aside with jealous arms. He profaned the grave! He understood her with his deep poet-heart, and rose. There was a pause.

Leonard was the first to break it.

"Come to your home with me, my child, and we will talk of *him* by the way."

"Him! Who are you? You did not know him!"—said the girl, still with anger. "Go away—why do you disturb me? I do no one harm. Go—go!"

"You do yourself harm, and that will grieve him if he sees you yonder! Come!"

The child looked at him through her blinding tears, and his face softened and soothed her.

"Go!" she said very plaintively, and in subdued accents. "I will but stay a minute more. I—I have so much to say yet."

Leonard left the churchyard, and waited without; and in a short time the child came forth, waved him aside as he approached her, and hurried away. He followed her at a distance, and saw her disappear within the inn.

CHAPTER V.

"HIP—HIP—HURRAH!" Such was the sound that greeted our young traveller as he reached the inn door—a sound joyous in itself, but sadly out of harmony with the feelings which the child sobbing on the tombless grave had left at his heart. The sound came from within, and was followed by thumps and stamps, and the jingle of glasses. A strong odour of tobacco was wafted to his olfactory sense. He hesitated a moment at the threshold. Before him, on benches under the beech-tree and within the arbour, were grouped sundry athletic forms with "pipes in the liberal air." The landlady, as she passed across the passage to the tap-room, caught sight of his form at the doorway, and came forward. Leonard still stood irresolute. He would have gone on his way, but for the child: she had interested him strongly.

"You seem full, ma'am," said he. "Can I have accommodation for the night?"

"Why, indeed, sir," said the landlady civilly, "I can give you a bed-room, but I don't know where to put you meanwhile. The two parlours and the tap-room and the kitchen are all choke full. There has been a great cattle fair in the neighbourhood, and I suppose we have as many as fifty farmers and drovers stopping here."

"As to that, ma'am, I can sit in the bedroom you are kind enough to give me; and if it does not cause you much trouble to let me have some tea there, I should be glad; but I can wait your leisure. Do not put yourself out of the way for me."

The landlady was touched by a consideration she was not much habituated to receive from her bluff customers.

"You speak very handsome, sir, and we will do our best to serve you, if you will excuse all faults. This way, sir." Leonard lowered his knapsack, stepped into the passage, with some difficulty forced his way through a knot of sturdy giants in top-boots or leathern gaiters, who were swarming in and out the tap-room, and followed his hostess up-stairs to a little bedroom at the top of the house.

"It is small, sir, and high," said the hostess apologetically. "But there be four gentlemen farmers that have come a great distance, and all the first floor is engaged; you will be more out of the noise here."

"Nothing can suit me better. But, stay—pardon me;" and Leonard, glancing at the garb of the hostess, observed she was not in mourning. "A little girl whom I saw in the churchyard yonder, weeping very bitterly—is she a relation of yours? Poor child, she seems to have deeper feelings than are common at her age."

"Ah, sir," said the landlady, putting the corner of her apron to her eyes, "it is a very sad story—I don't know what to do. Her father was taken ill on his way to Lunnon, and stopped here, and has been buried four days. And the poor little girl seems to have no relations—and where is she to go? Laryer Jones says we must pass her to Marybone parish, where her father lived last; and what's to become of her then? My heart bleeds to think on it." Here there rose such an uproar from below, that it was evident some quarrel had broke out; and the hostess, recalled to her duties, hastened to carry thither her propitiatory influences.

Leonard seated himself pensively by the little lattice. Here was some one more alone in the world than he. And she, poor orphan, had no stout man's heart to grapple with fate, and no golden manuscripts that were to be as the "Open-Sesame" to the treasures of Aladdin. By and by, the hostess brought him up a tray with tea and other refreshments, and Leonard resumed his inquiries. "No relatives?" said he; "surely the child must have some kinsfolk in London? Did her father leave no directions, or was he in possession of his faculties?"

"Yes, sir; he was quite reasonable-like to the last. And I

asked him if he had not anything on his mind, and he said, 'I have.' And I said, 'Your little girl, sir?' And he answered me, 'Yes, ma'am;' and laying his head on his pillow, he wept very quietly. I could not say more myself, for it set me off to see him cry so meekly; but my husband is harder nor I, and he said, 'Cheer up, Mr Digby; had not you better write to your friends.'

"'Friends!' said the gentleman, in such a voice! 'Friends I have but one, and I am going to Him! I cannot take her there!' Then he seemed suddenly to recollect hisself, and called for his clothes, and rummaged in the pockets as if looking for some address, and could not find it. He seemed a forgetful kind of gentleman, and his hands were what I call *helpless* hands, sir! And then he gasped out, 'Stop—stop! I never had the address. Write to Lord Les—,' something like Lord Lester—but we could not make out the name. Indeed he did not finish it, for there was a rush of blood to his lips; and though he seemed sensible when he recovered, (and knew us and his little girl too, till he went off smiling,) he never spoke word more."

"Poor man," said Leonard, wiping his eyes. "But his little girl surely remembers the name that he did not finish?"

"No. She says, he must have meant a gentleman whom they had met in the Park not long ago, who was very kind to her father, and was Lord something; but she don't remember the name, for she never saw him before or since, and her father talked very little about any one lately, but thought he should find some kind friends at Screwstown, and travelled down there with her from Lunnon. But she supposes he was disappointed, for he went out, came back, and merely told her to put up the things, as they must go back to Lunnon. And on his way there he—died. Hush, what's that? I hope she did not overhear us. No, we were talking low. She has the next room to your'n, sir. I thought I heard her sobbing. Hush!"

"In the next room? I hear nothing. Well, with your leave, I will speak to her before I quit you. And had her father no money with him?"

"Yes, a few sovereigns, sir; they paid for his funeral, and

there is a little left still—enough to take her to town; for my husband said, says he, 'Hannah, the widow *gave* her mite, and we must not *take* the orphan's;' and my husband is a hard man, too, sir—bless him!"

"Let me take your hand, ma'am. God reward you both."

"La sir!—why, even Dr Dosewell said, rather grumpily though, 'Never mind my bill; but don't call me up at six o'clock in the morning again, without knowing a little more about people.' And I never afore knew Dr Dosewell go without his bill being paid. He said it was a trick o' the other Doctor to spite him."

"What other Doctor?"

"Oh, a very good gentleman, who got out with Mr Digby when he was taken ill, and stayed till the next morning; and our Doctor says his name is Morgan, and he lives in—Lunnon, and is a homy—something."

"Homicide," suggested Leonard ignorantly.

"Ah—homicide; something like that, only a deal longer and worse. But he left some of the tiniest little balls you ever see, sir, to give the child; but, bless you, they did her no good—how should they?"

"Tiny balls, oh—homœopathist—I understand. And the Doctor was kind to her; perhaps he may help her. Have you written to him?"

"But we don't know his address, and Lunnon is a vast place, sir."

"I am going to London, and will find it out."

"Ah, sir, you seem very kind; and sin' she must go to Lunnon, (for what can we do with her here?—she's too genteel for service,) I wish she was going with you."

"With me!" said Leonard, startled—"with me! Well, why not?"

"I am sure she comes of good blood, sir. You would have known her father was quite the gentleman, only to see him die, sir. He went off so kind and civil like, as if he was ashamed to give so much trouble—quite a gentleman, if ever there was one. And so are you, sir, I'm sure," said the landlady, curtseying; "I know what gentlefolk be. I've been a housekeeper in

the first of families in this very shire, sir, though I can't say I've served in Lunnon ; and so, as gentlefolks know each other, I've no doubt you could find out her relations. Dear—dear ! Coming, coming !"

Here there were loud cries for the hostess, and she hurried away. The farmers and drovers were beginning to depart, and their bills were to be made out and paid. Leonard saw his hostess no more that night. The last hip—hip—hurrah, was heard ; some toast, perhaps to the health of the county members ;—and the chamber of woe, beside Leonard's, rattled with the shout. By and by, silence gradually succeeded the various dissonant sounds below. The carts and gigs rolled away ; the clatter of hoofs on the road ceased ; there was then a dumb dull sound as of locking-up, and low humming voices below, and footsteps mounting the stairs to bed, with now and then a drunken hiccup or maudlin laugh, as some conquered votary of Bacchus was fairly carried up to his domicile.

All, then, at last was silent, just as the clock from the church sounded the stroke of eleven.

Leonard, meanwhile, had been looking over his MSS. There was first a project for an improvement on the steam-engine—a project that had long lain in his mind, begun with the first knowledge of mechanics that he had gleaned from his purchases of the Tinker. He put that aside now—it required too great an effort of the reasoning faculty to re-examine. He glanced less hastily over a collection of essays on various subjects—some that he thought indifferent, some that he thought good. He then lingered over a collection of verses, written in his best hand with loving care—verses first inspired by his perusal of Nora's melancholy memorials. These verses were as a diary of his heart and his fancy—those deep unwitnessed struggles which the boyhood of all more thoughtful natures has passed in its bright yet mirky storm of the cloud and the lightning-flash—though but few boys pause to record the crisis from which slowly emerges Man. And these first desultory grapplings with the fugitive airy images that flit through the dim chambers of the brain, had become with each effort more sustained and vigorous, till the phantoms were spelled, the flying ones arrested,

the Immaterial seized, and clothed with Form. Gazing on his last effort, Leonard felt that there at length spoke forth the Poet. It was a work which, though as yet but half completed, came from a strong hand; not that shadow trembling on unsteady waters, which is but the pale reflex and imitation of some bright mind, sphered out of reach and afar, but an original substance—a life—a thing of the *Creative* Faculty—breathing back already the breath it had received. This work had paused during Leonard's residence with Mr Avenel, or had only now and then, in stealth, and at night, received a rare touch. Now, as with a fresh eye, he re-perused it, and with that strange, innocent admiration, not of self—(for a man's work is not, alas! himself—it is the beautified and idealised essence, extracted he knows not how from his own human elements of clay)—admiration known but to poets—their purest delight, often their sole reward. And then, with a warmer and more earthly beat of his full heart, he rushed in fancy to the Great City, where all rivers of Fame meet, but not to be merged and lost—sallying forth again, individualised and separate, to flow through that one vast Thought of God which we call THE WORLD.

He put up his papers; and opened his window, as was his ordinary custom, before he retired to rest—for he had many odd habits; and he loved to look out into the night when he prayed. His soul seemed to escape from the body—to mount on the air—to gain more rapid access to the far Throne in the Infinite—when his breath went forth among the winds, and his eyes rested fixed on the stars, of Heaven.

So the boy prayed silently; and after his prayer he was about lingeringly to close the lattice, when he heard distinctly sobs close at hand. He paused, and held his breath; then looked gently out; the casement next his own was also open. Some one was also at watch by that casement—perhaps also praying. He listened yet more intently, and caught, soft and low, the words, "Father—father—do you hear me *now?*"

CHAPTER VI.

LEONARD opened his door and stole towards that of the room adjoining; for his first natural impulse had been to enter and console. But when his touch was on the handle, he drew back. Child though the mourner was, her sorrows were rendered yet more sacred from intrusion by her sex. Something, he knew not what, in his young ignorance, withheld him from the threshold. To have crossed it then would have seemed to him profanation. So he returned, and for hours yet he occasionally heard the sobs, till they died away, and childhood wept itself to sleep.

But the next morning, when he heard his neighbour astir, he knocked gently at her door: there was no answer. He entered softly, and saw her seated very listlessly in the centre of the room—as if it had no familiar nook or corner as the rooms of home have—her hands drooping on her lap, and her eyes gazing desolately on the floor. Then he approached and spoke to her.

Helen was very subdued, and very silent. Her tears seemed dried up; and it was long before she gave sign or token that she heeded him. At length, however, he gradually succeeded in rousing her interest; and the first symptom of his success was in the quiver of her lip, and the overflow of her downcast eyes.

By little and little he wormed himself into her confidence; and she told him, in broken whispers, her simple story. But, what moved him the most was, that, beyond her sense of loneliness, she did not seem to feel her own unprotected state. She

mourned the object she had nursed, and heeded, and cherished; for she had been rather the protectress than the protected to the helpless dead. He could not gain from her any more satisfactory information than the landlady had already imparted, as to her friends and prospects; but she permitted him passively to look among the effects her father had left—save only that, if his hand touched something that seemed to her associations especially holy, she waved him back, or drew it quickly away. There were many bills receipted in the name of Captain Digby—old yellow faded music-scores for the flute—extracts of Parts from Prompt Books—gay parts of lively comedies, in which heroes have so noble a contempt for money—fit heroes for a Sheridan and a Farquhar;—close by these were several pawnbroker's tickets; and, not arrayed smoothly, but crumpled up, as if with an indignant nervous clutch of the helpless hands, some two or three letters. He asked Helen's permission to glance at these, for they might give a clue to friends. Helen gave the permission by a silent bend of the head. The letters, however, were but short and freezing answers from what appeared to be distant connections or former friends, or persons to whom the deceased had applied for some situation. They were all very disheartening in their tone. Leonard next endeavoured to refresh Helen's memory as to the name of the nobleman which had been last on her father's lips: but there he failed wholly. For it may be remembered that Lord L'Estrange, when he pressed his loan on Mr Digby, and subsequently told that gentleman to address to him at Mr Egerton's, had, from a natural delicacy, sent the child on, that she might not witness the charity bestowed on the father; and Helen said truly, that Mr Digby had sunk latterly into a habitual silence on all his affairs. She might have heard her father mention the name, but she had not treasured it up; all she could say was, that she should know the stranger again if she met him, and his dog too. Seeing that the child had grown calm, Leonard was then going to leave the room, in order to confer with the hostess; when she rose suddenly, though noiselessly, and put her little hand in his, as if to detain him. She did not say a word—the action said all—said, "Do not desert me." And Leonard's heart rushed to his lips,

and he answered to the action, as he bent down and kissed her cheek, "Orphan, will you go with me? We have one Father yet to both of us, and He will guide us on earth. I am fatherless like you." She raised her eyes to his—looked at him long—and then leant her head confidingly on his strong young shoulder.

CHAPTER VII.

At noon that same day, the young man and the child were on their road to London. The host had at first a little demurred at trusting Helen to so young a companion; but Leonard, in his happy ignorance, had talked so sanguinely of finding out this lord, or some adequate protectors for the child; and in so grand a strain, though with all sincerity—had spoken of his own great prospects in the metropolis, (he did not say what they were!)—that had he been the craftiest impostor he could not more have taken in the rustic host. And while the landlady still cherished the illusive fancy, that all gentlefolks must know each other in London, as they did in a county, the landlord believed, at least, that a young man so respectably dressed, although but a foot-traveller—who talked in so confident a tone, and who was so willing to undertake what might be rather a burthensome charge, unless he saw how to rid himself of it—would be sure to have friends, older and wiser than himself, who would judge what could best be done for the orphan.

And what was the host to do with her? Better this volunteered escort, at least, than vaguely passing her on from parish to parish, and leaving her friendless at last in the streets of London. Helen, too, smiled for the first time on being asked her wishes, and again put her hand in Leonard's. In short, so it was settled.

The little girl made up a bundle of the things she most prized or needed. Leonard did not feel the additional load, as he slung it to his knapsack: the rest of the luggage was to be sent to London as soon as Leonard wrote, (which he promised to do soon,) and gave an address.

Helen paid her last visit to the churchyard; and she joined her companion as he stood on the road, without the solemn precincts. And now they had gone on some hours; and when he asked if she were tired, she still answered "No." But Leonard was merciful, and made their day's journey short; and it took them some days to reach London. By the long lonely way, they grew so intimate; at the end of the second day, they called each other brother and sister; and Leonard, to his delight, found that as her grief, with the bodily movement and the change of scene, subsided from its first intenseness and its insensibility to other impressions, she developed a quickness of comprehension far beyond her years. Poor child! *that* had been forced upon her by Necessity. And she understood him in his spiritual consolations—half poetical, half religious; and she listened to his own tale, and the story of his self-education and solitary struggles—those, too, she understood. But when he burst out with his enthusiasm, his glorious hopes, his confidence in the fate before them, then she would shake her head very quietly and very sadly. Did she comprehend *them?* Alas! perhaps too well. She knew more as to real life than he did. Leonard was at first their joint treasurer; but before the second day was over, Helen seemed to discover that he was too lavish; and she told him so, with a prudent grave look, putting her hand on his arm as he was about to enter an inn to dine; and the gravity would have been comic, but that the eyes through their moisture were so meek and grateful. She felt he was about to incur that ruinous extravagance on her account. Somehow or other, the purse found its way into her keeping, and then she looked proud and in her natural element.

Ah! what happy meals under her care were provided; so much more enjoyable than in dull, sanded inn parlours, swarming with flies and reeking with stale tobacco. She would leave him at the entrance of a village, bound forward, and cater, and return with a little basket and a pretty blue jug—which she had bought on the road—the last filled with new milk; the first with new bread and some special dainty in radishes or water-cresses. And she had such a talent for finding out the prettiest spot whereon to halt and dine: sometimes in the

heart of a wood—so still, it was like a forest in fairy tales, the hare stealing through the alleys, or the squirrel peeping at them from the boughs; sometimes by a little brawling stream, with the fishes seen under the clear wave, and shooting round the crumbs thrown to them. They made an Arcadia of the dull road up to their dread Thermopylæ — the war against the million that waited them on the other side of their pass through Tempé.

"Shall we be as happy when we are *great?*" said Leonard, in his grand simplicity.

Helen sighed, and the wise little head was shaken.

CHAPTER VIII.

At last they came within easy reach of London; but Leonard had resolved not to enter the metropolis fatigued and exhausted, as a wanderer needing refuge, but fresh and elate, as a conqueror coming in triumph to take possession of the capital. Therefore they halted early in the evening of the day preceding this imperial entry, about six miles from the metropolis, in the neighbourhood of Ealing, (for by that route lay their way.) They were not tired on arriving at their inn. The weather was singularly lovely, with that combination of softness and brilliancy which is only known to the rare true summer days of England: all below so green, above so blue—days of which we have about six in the year, and recall vaguely when we read of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, of Damsel and Knight in Spenser's golden Summer Song,—or of Jacques, dropped under the oak tree, watching the deer amidst the dells of Ardennes. So, after a little pause at their inn, they strolled forth, not for travel but pleasure, towards the cool of sunset, passing by the grounds that once belonged to the Duke of Kent, and catching a glimpse of the shrubs and lawns of that beautiful domain through the lodge-gates; then they crossed into some fields, and came to a little rivulet called the Brent. Helen had been more sad that day than on any during their journey. Perhaps because, on approaching London, the memory of her father became more vivid; perhaps from her precocious knowledge of life, and her foreboding of what was to befall them, children that they both were. But Leonard was selfish that day; he could not be influenced by his companion's sorrow, he was so full of his own

sense of being, and he already caught from the atmosphere the fever that belongs to anxious Capitals.

"Sit here, sister," said he imperiously, throwing himself under the shade of a pollard tree that overhung the winding brook, "sit here and talk."

He flung off his hat, tossed back his rich curls, and sprinkled his brow from the stream that eddied round the roots of the tree that bulged out, bald and gnarled, from the bank, and delved into the waves below. Helen quietly obeyed him, and nestled close to his side.

"And so this London is really very vast?—VERY?" he repeated inquisitively.

"Very," answered Helen, as abstractedly she plucked the cowslips near her, and let them fall into the running waters. "See how the flowers are carried down the stream! They are lost now. London is to us what the river is to the flowers—very vast—very strong;" and she added, after a pause, "very cruel!"

"Cruel! Ah, it *has* been so to you; but *now!*—now I will take care of you!" he smiled triumphantly; and his smile was beautiful both in its pride and its kindness. It is astonishing how Leonard had altered since he had left his uncle's. He was both younger and older; for the sense of genius, when it snaps its shackles, makes us both older and wiser as to the world it soars to—younger and blinder as to the world it springs from.

"And it is not a very handsome city either, you say?"

"Very ugly, indeed," said Helen, with some fervour; "at least all I have seen of it."

"But there must be parts that are prettier than others? You say there are parks: why should not we lodge near them, and look upon the green trees?"

"That would be nice," said Helen, almost joyously; "but—" and here the head was shaken—"there are no lodgings for us except in courts and alleys."

"Why?"

"Why?" echoed Helen, with a smile, and she held up the purse.

"Pooh! always that horrid purse; as if, too, we were not

going to fill it. Did not I tell you the story of Fortunio? Well, at all events, we will go first to the neighbourhood where you last lived, and learn there all we can; and then the day after to-morrow, I will see this Dr Morgan, and find out the Lord—"

The tears started to Helen's soft eyes. "You want to get rid of me soon, brother."

"I! Ah, I feel so happy to have you with me, it seems to me as if I had pined for you all my life, and you had come at last; for I never had brother, nor sister, nor any one to love, that was not older than myself, except—"

"Except the young lady you told me of," said Helen, turning away her face; for children are very jealous.

"Yes, I loved her, love her still. But that was different," said Leonard. "I could never have talked to her as to you: to you I open my whole heart; you are my little Muse, Helen. I confess to you my wild whims and fancies as frankly as if I were writing poetry." As he said this, a step was heard, and a shadow fell over the stream. A belated angler appeared on the margin, drawing his line impatiently across the water, as if to worry some dozing fish into a bite before it finally settled itself for the night. Absorbed in his occupation, the angler did not observe the young persons on the sward under the tree, and he halted there, close upon them.

"Curse that perch!" said he aloud.

"Take care, sir," cried Leonard; for the man, in stepping back, nearly trod upon Helen.

The angler turned. "What's the matter? Hist! you have frightened my perch. Keep still, can't you?"

Helen drew herself out of the way, and Leonard remained motionless. He remembered Jackeymo, and felt a sympathy for the angler.

"It is the most extraordinary perch, that!" muttered the stranger, soliloquising. "It has the devil's own luck. It must have been born with a silver spoon in its mouth, that damned perch! I shall never catch it—never! Ha!—no—only a weed. I give it up." With this, he indignantly jerked his rod from the water, and began to disjoint it. While leisurely engaged in this occupation, he turned to Leonard.

"Humph! are you intimately acquainted with this stream, sir?"

"No," answered Leonard. "I never saw it before."

ANGLER, (solemnly.)—"Then, young man, take my advice, and do not give way to its fascinations. Sir, I am a martyr to this stream; it has been the Delilah of my existence."

LEONARD, (interested, the last sentence seemed to him poetical.)—"The Delilah! Sir, the Delilah!"

ANGLER.—"The Delilah. Young man, listen, and be warned by example. When I was about your age, I first came to this stream to fish. Sir, on that fatal day, about 3 P. M., I hooked up a fish—such a big one, it must have weighed a pound and a half. Sir, it was that length;" and the angler put finger to wrist. "And just when I had got it nearly ashore, by the very place where you are sitting, on that shelving bank, young man, the line broke, and the perch twisted himself among those roots, and—cacodemon that he was—ran off, hook and all. Well, that fish haunted me; never before had I seen such a fish. Minnows I had caught in the Thames and elsewhere, also gudgeons, and occasionally a dace. But a fish like that—a PERCH—all his fins up, like the sails of a man-of-war—a monster perch—a whale of a perch!—No, never till then had I known what leviathans lie hid within the deeps. I could not sleep till I had returned; and again, sir,—I caught that perch. And this time I pulled him fairly out of the water. He escaped; and how did he escape? Sir, he left his eye behind him on the hook. Years, long years, have passed since then; but never shall I forget the agony of that moment."

LEONARD.—"To the perch, sir?"

ANGLER.—"Perch! agony to him! He enjoyed it:—agony to me. I gazed on that eye, and the eye looked as sly and as wicked as if it was laughing in my face. Well, sir, I had heard that there is no better bait for a perch than a perch's eye. I adjusted that eye on the hook, and dropped in the line gently. The water was unusually clear; in two minutes I saw that perch return. He approached the hook; he recognised his eye—frisked his tail—made a plunge—and, as I live, carried off the eye, safe and sound; and I saw him digesting it by the side

of that water-lily. The mocking fiend! Seven times since that day, in the course of a varied and eventful life, have I caught that perch, and seven times has that perch escaped."

LEONARD, (astonished.) — "It can't be the same perch; perches are very tender fish—a hook inside of it, and an eye hooked out of it—no perch could withstand such havoc in its constitution."

ANGLER, (with an appearance of awe.)—"It does seem supernatural. But it *is* that perch; for harkye, sir, there is ONLY ONE perch in the whole brook! All the years I have fished here, I have never caught another perch; and this solitary inmate of the watery element I know by sight better than I knew my own lost father. For each time that I have raised it out of the water, its profile has been turned to me, and I have seen, with a shudder, that it has had only—One Eye! It is a most mysterious and a most diabolical phenomenon that perch! It has been the ruin of my prospects in life. I was offered a situation in Jamaica: I could not go, with that perch left here in triumph. I might afterwards have had an appointment in India, but I could not put the ocean between myself and that perch: thus have I frittered away my existence in the fatal metropolis of my native land. And once a-week, from February to December, I come hither—Good Heavens! if I should catch the perch at last, the occupation of my existence will be gone."

Leonard gazed curiously at the angler, as the last thus mournfully concluded. The ornate turn of his periods did not suit with his costume. He looked woefully threadbare and shabby—a genteel sort of shabbiness too—shabbiness in black. There was humour in the corners of his lip; and his hands, though they did not seem very clean—indeed his occupation was not friendly to such niceties—were those of a man who had not known manual labour. His face was pale and puffed, but the tip of the nose was red. He did not seem as if the watery element was as familiar to himself as to his Delilah—the perch.

"Such is Life!" recommenced the angler in a moralising tone, as he slid his rod into its canvass case. "If a man knew what it was to fish all one's life in a stream that has only one

perch!—to catch that one perch nine times in all, and nine times to see it fall back into the water, plump;—if a man knew what it was—why, then"—Here the angler looked over his shoulder full at Leonard—"why then, young sir, he would know what human life is to vain ambition. Good evening."

Away he went treading over the daisies and king-cups. Helen's eyes followed him wistfully.

"What a strange person!" said Leonard, laughing.

"I think he is a very wise one," murmured Helen; and she came close up to Leonard, and took his hand in both hers, as if she felt already that he was in need of the Comforter—the line broken, and the perch lost!

CHAPTER IX.

At noon the next day, London stole upon them, through a gloomy, thick, oppressive atmosphere ;—for where is it that we can say London *bursts* on the sight ? It stole on them through one of its fairest and most gracious avenues of approach—by the stately gardens of Kensington—along the side of Hyde Park, and so on towards Cumberland Gate.

Leonard was not the least struck. And yet, with a very little money, and a very little taste, it would be easy to render this entrance to London as grand and as imposing as that to Paris from the *Champs Elysées*. As they came near the Edgeware Road, Helen took her new brother by the hand and guided him. For she knew all that neighbourhood, and she was acquainted with a lodging near that occupied by her father, (to *that* lodging itself, she could not have gone for the world,) where they might be housed cheaply.

But just then the sky, so dull and overcast since morning, seemed one mass of black cloud. There suddenly came on a violent storm of rain. The boy and girl took refuge in a covered mews, in a street running out of the Edgeware Road. This shelter soon became crowded ; the two young pilgrims crept close to the wall, apart from the rest—Leonard's arm round Helen's waist, sheltering her from the rain that the strong wind contending with it beat in through the passage. Presently a young gentlemen of better mien and dress than the other refugees, entered, not hastily, but rather with a slow and proud step, as if, though he deigned to take shelter, he scorned to run to it. He glanced somewhat haughtily at the assembled group—passed on through the midst of it—came near Leonard

—took off his hat, and shook the rain from its brim. His head thus uncovered, left all his features exposed; and the village youth recognised, at the first glance, his old victorious assailant on the green at Hazeldean.

Yet Randal Leslie was altered. His dark cheek was as thin as in boyhood, and even yet more wasted by intense study and night vigils; but the expression of his face was at once more refined and manly, and there was a steady concentrated light in his eye, like that of one who has been in the habit of bringing all his thoughts to one point. He looked older than he was. He was dressed simply in black, a colour which became him; and altogether his aspect and figure were not showy indeed, but distinguished. He looked, to the common eye, a gentleman; and to the more observant, a scholar.

Helter-skelter!—pell-mell! the group in the passage—now pressed each on each—now scattered on all sides—making way—rushing down the mews—against the walls—as a fiery horse darted under shelter. The rider, a young man, with a very handsome face, and dressed with that peculiar care which we commonly call dandyism, cried out, good-humouredly, "Don't be afraid; the horse shan't hurt any of you—a thousand pardons—so ho! so ho!" He patted the horse, and it stood as still as a statue, filling up the centre of the passage. The groups resettled—Randal approached the rider.

"Frank Hazeldean!"

"Ah—is it indeed Randal Leslie!"

Frank was off his horse in a moment, and the bridle was consigned to the care of a slim prentice-boy holding a bundle.

"My dear fellow, how glad I am to see you. How lucky it was that I should turn in here. Not like me either, for I don't much care for a ducking. Staying in town, Randal?"

"Yes; at your uncle's, Mr Egerton. I have left Oxford."

"For good?"

"For good.'

"But you have not taken your degree, I think? We Etonians all considered you booked for a double first. Oh! we have been so proud of your fame—you carried off all the prizes."

"Not all; but some, certainly. Mr Egerton offered me my choice—to stay for my degree, or to enter at once into the Foreign Office. I preferred the end to the means. For, after all, what good are academical honours but as the entrance to life? To enter now, is to save a step in a long way, Frank."

"Ah! you were always ambitious, and you will make a great figure, I am sure."

"Perhaps so—if I work for it. Knowledge is power!"

Leonard started.

"And you!" resumed Randal, looking with some curious attention at his old school-fellow. "You never came to Oxford. I did hear you were going into the army."

"I am in the Guards," said Frank, trying hard not to look too conceited as he made that acknowledgment. "The Governor pished a little, and would rather I had come to live with him in the old hall, and take to farming. Time enough for that—eh? By Jove, Randal, how pleasant a thing is life in London! Do you go to Almack's to-night?"

"No; Wednesday is a holiday in the House! There is a great Parliamentary dinner at Mr Egerton's. He is in the Cabinet now, you know; but you don't see much of your uncle, I think."

"Our sets are different," said the young gentleman, in a tone of voice worthy of Brummell. "All those parliamentary fellows are devilish dull. The rain's over. I don't know whether the Governor would like me to call at Grosvenor Square; but pray come and see me. Here's my card to remind you; you must dine at our mess. Such capital fellows! What day will you fix?"

"I will call and let you know. Don't you find it rather expensive in the Guards? I remember that you thought the Governor, as you call him, used to chafe a little when you wrote for more pocket-money; and the only time I ever remember to have seen you with tears in your eyes, was when Mr Hazeldean, in sending you five pounds, reminded you that his estates were not entailed—were at his own disposal, and they should never go to an extravagant spendthrift. It was not a pleasant threat that, Frank."

"Oh!" cried the young man, colouring deeply. "It was not the threat that pained me; it was that my father could think so meanly of me as to fancy that—Well—well, but those were schoolboy days. And my father was always more generous than I deserved. We must see a good deal of each other, Randal. How good-natured you were at Eton, making my longs and shorts for me; I shall never forget it. Do call soon."

Frank swung himself into his saddle, and rewarded the slim youth with half-a-crown—a largess four times more ample than his father would have deemed sufficient. A jerk of the reins and a touch of the heel—off bounded the fiery horse and the gay young rider. Randal mused; and as the rain had now ceased, the passengers under shelter dispersed and went their way. Only Randal, Leonard, and Helen remained behind. Then, as Randal, still musing, lifted his eyes, they fell full upon Leonard's face. He started, passed his hand quickly over his brow—looked again, hard and piercingly; and the change in his pale cheek to a shade still paler—a quick compression and nervous gnawing of his lip—showed that he too recognised an old foe. Then his glance ran over Leonard's dress, which was somewhat dust-stained, but far above the class amongst which the peasant was born. Randal raised his brows in surprise, and with a smile slightly supercilious—the smile stung Leonard; and with a slow step Randal left the passage, and took his way towards Grosvenor Square. The Entrance of Ambition was clear to *him*.

Then the little girl once more took Leonard by the hand, and led him through rows of humble, obscure, dreary streets. It seemed almost like an allegory personified, as the sad, silent child led on the penniless and low-born adventurer of genius by the squalid shops, and through the winding lanes, which grew meaner and meaner, till both their forms vanished from the view.

CHAPTER X.

"But do come; change your dress, return and dine with me; you will have just time, Harley. You will meet the most eminent men of our party; surely they are worth your study, philosopher that you affect to be."

Thus said Audley Egerton to Lord L'Estrange, with whom he had been riding (after the toils of his office.) The two gentlemen were in Audley's library. Mr Egerton, as usual, buttoned up, seated in his chair, in the erect posture of a man who scorns "inglorious ease." Harley, as usual, thrown at length on the sofa, his long hair in careless curls, his neckcloth loose, his habiliments flowing—*simplex munditiis*, indeed—his grace all his own; seemingly negligent, never slovenly; at ease everywhere and with every one, even with Mr Audley Egerton, who chilled or awed the ease out of most people.

"Nay, my dear Audley, forgive me. But your eminent men are all men of one idea, and that not a diverting one—politics! politics! politics! The storm in the saucer."

"But what is your life, Harley?—the saucer without the storm?"

"Do you know, that's very well said, Audley? I did not think you had so much liveliness of repartee. Life—life! it is insipid, it is shallow. No launching Argosies in the saucer. Audley, I have the oddest fancy—"

"*That* of course," said Audley drily; "you never have any other. What is the new one?"

Harley, (with great gravity.)—"Do you believe in Mesmerism?"

AUDLEY.—"Certainly not."

HARLEY.—"If it were in the power of an animal magnetiser to get me out of my own skin into somebody else's! *That's* my fancy! I am so tired of myself—so tired! I have run through all my ideas—know every one of them by heart. When some pretentious impostor of an idea perks itself up and says, 'Look at me—I'm a new acquaintance,' I just give it a nod, and say, 'Not at all—you have only got a new coat on; you are the same old wretch that has bored me these last twenty years; get away.' But if one could be in a new skin! if I could be for half-an-hour your tall porter, or one of your eminent matter-of-fact men, I should then really travel into a new world.* Every man's brain must be a world in itself, eh? If I could but make a parochial settlement even in yours, Audley—run over all your thoughts and sensations. Upon my life, I'll go and talk to that French mesmeriser about it."

AUDLEY, (who does not seem to like the notion of having his thoughts and sensations rummaged, even by his friend, and even in fancy.)—"Pooh, pooh, pooh! Do talk like a man of sense."

HARLEY.—"Man of sense! Where shall I find a model? I don't know a man of sense!—never met such a creature. Don't believe it ever existed. At one time I thought Socrates must have been a man of sense;—a delusion; he would stand gazing into the air, and talking to his Genius from sunrise to sunset. Is that like a man of sense? Poor Audley; how puzzled he looks! Well, I'll try and talk sense to oblige you. And first, (here Harley raised himself on his elbow)—first, is it true, as I have heard vaguely, that you are paying court to the sister of that infamous Italian traitor?"

"Madame di Negra? No: I am not paying *court* to her," answered Audley with a cold smile. "But she is very hand-

* If, at the date in which Lord L'Estrange held this conversation with Mr Egerton, Alfred de Musset had written his comedies, we should suspect that his lordship had plagiarised from one of them the whimsical idea that he here vents upon Audley. In repeating it, the author at least cannot escape from the charge of obligation to a writer whose humour is sufficiently opulent to justify the loan.

some; she is very clever; she is useful to me—I need not say how or why; that belongs to my *métier* as politician. But, I think, if you will take my advice, or get your friend to take it, I could obtain from her brother, through my influence with her, some liberal concessions to your exile. She is very anxious to know where he is."

"You have not told her?"

"No; I promised you I would keep that secret."

"Be sure you do; it is only for some mischief, some snare, that she could desire such information. Concessions! pooh! This is no question of concessions, but of rights."

"I think you should leave your friend to judge of that."

"Well, I will write to him. Meanwhile, beware of this woman. I have heard much of her abroad, and she has the character of her brother for duplicity and—"

"Beauty," interrupted Audley, turning the conversation with practised adroitness. "I am told that the Count is one of the handsomest men in Europe, much handsomer than his sister still, though nearly twice her age. Tut—tut—Harley; fear not for me. I am proof against all feminine attractions. This heart is dead."

"Nay, nay; it is not for you to speak thus—leave that to me. But even *I* will not say it. The heart never dies. And you; what have you lost?—a wife; true: an excellent noble-hearted woman. But was it love that you felt for her? Enviable man, have you ever loved?"

"Perhaps not, Harley," said Audley, with a sombre aspect, and in dejected accents; "very few men ever have loved, at least as you mean by the word. But there are other passions than love that kill the heart, and reduce us to mechanism."

While Egerton spoke, Harley turned aside, and his breast heaved. There was a short silence; Audley was the first to break it.

"Speaking of my lost wife, I am sorry that you do not approve what I have done for her young kinsman, Randal Leslie."

HARLEY, (recovering himself with an effort.)—"Is it true kindness to bid him exchange manly independence for the protection of an official patron?"

AUDLEY.—"I did not bid him. I gave him his choice. At his age I should have chosen as he has done."

HARLEY.—"I trust not; I think better of you. But answer me one question frankly, and then I will ask another. Do you mean to make this young man your heir?"

AUDLEY, (with a slight embarrassment.)—"Heir, pooh! I am young still. I may live as long as he—time enough to think of that."

HARLEY.—"Then now to my second question. Have you told this youth plainly that he may look to you for influence, but not for wealth?"

AUDLEY, (firmly.)—"I think I have; but I shall repeat it more emphatically."

HARLEY.—"Then I am satisfied as to your conduct, but not as to his. For he has too acute an intellect not to know what it is to forfeit independence; and, depend on it, he has made his calculations, and would throw you into the bargain in any balance that he could strike in his favour. You go by your experience in judging men; I by my instincts. Nature warns us as it does the inferior animals—only we are too conceited, we bipeds, to heed her. My instincts of soldier and gentleman recoil from that old young man. He has the soul of the Jesuit. I see it in his eye—I hear it in the tread of his foot; *volto sciolto* he has not; *i pensieri stretti* he has. Hist! I hear now his step in the hall. I should know it from a thousand. That's his very touch on the handle of the door."

Randal Leslie entered. Harley—who, despite his disregard for forms, and his dislike to Randal, was too high-bred not to be polite to his junior in age or inferior in rank—rose and bowed. But his bright piercing eyes did not soften as they caught and bore down the deeper and more latent fire in Randal's. Harley then did not resume his seat, but moved to the mantelpiece, and leant against it.

RANDAL.—"I have fulfilled your commissions, Mr Egerton. I went first to Maida Hill, and saw Mr Burley. I gave him the cheque, but he said 'it was too much, and he should return half to the banker;' he will write the article as you suggested. I then—"

AUDLEY.—"Enough, Randal! we will not fatigue Lord L'Estrange with these little details of a life that displeases him —the life political."

HARLEY.—"But *these* details do not displease me; they reconcile me to my own life. Go on, pray, Mr Leslie."

Randal had too much tact to need the cautioning glance of Mr Egerton. He did not continue, but said, with a soft voice, "Do you think, Lord L'Estrange, that the contemplation of the mode of life pursued by others *can* reconcile a man to his own, if he had before thought it needed a reconciler?"

Harley looked pleased, for the question was ironical; and, if there was a thing in the world he abhorred, it was flattery.

"Recollect your Lucretius, Mr Leslie, the *Suave mare*, &c., 'pleasant from the cliff to see the mariners tossed on the ocean.' Faith, I think that sight reconciles one to the cliff—though, before, one might have been teased by the splash from the spray, and deafened by the scream of the sea-gulls. But I leave you, Audley. Strange that I have heard no more of my soldier. Remember I have your promise when I come to claim it. Good-bye, Mr Leslie, I hope that Burley's article will be worth the—cheque."

Lord L'Estrange mounted his horse, which was still at the door, and rode through the Park. But he was no longer now unknown by sight. Bows and nods saluted him on every side.

"Alas, I am found out then," said he to himself. "That terrible Duchess of Knaresborough, too—I must fly my country." He pushed his horse into a canter, and was soon out of the Park. As he dismounted at his father's sequestered house, you would have hardly supposed him the same whimsical, fantastic, but deep and subtle humourist that delighted in perplexing the material Audley. For his expressive face was unutterably serious. But the moment he came into the presence of his parents, the countenance was again lighted and cheerful. It brightened the whole room like sunshine.

CHAPTER XI.

"Mr Leslie," said Egerton, when Harley had left the library, "you did not act with your usual discretion in touching upon matters connected with politics in the presence of a third party."

"I feel that already, sir; my excuse is, that I held Lord L'Estrange to be your most intimate friend."

"A public man, Mr Leslie, would ill serve his country if he were not especially reserved towards his private friends—when they do not belong to his party."

"But, pardon me my ignorance. Lord Lansmere is so well known to be one of your supporters, that I fancied his son must share his sentiments, and be in your confidence."

Egerton's brows slightly contracted, and gave a stern expression to a countenance always firm and decided. He, however, answered in a mild tone.

"At the entrance into political life, Mr Leslie, there is nothing in which a young man of your talents should be more on his guard than thinking for himself; he will nearly always think wrong. And I believe that is one reason why young men of talent disappoint their friends, and remain so long out of office."

A haughty flush passed over Randal's brow, and faded away quickly; he bowed in silence.

Egerton resumed, as if in explanation, and even in kindly apology—

"Look at Lord L'Estrange himself. What young man could come into life with brighter auspices? Rank, wealth, high animal spirits, (a great advantage those same spirits, Mr Leslie,) courage, self-possession, scholarship as brilliant perhaps as your

own; and now see how his life is wasted! Why? He always thought fit to think for himself. He could never be broken in to harness, and never will be. The State coach, Mr Leslie, requires that all the horses should pull together."

"With submission, sir," answered Randal, "I should think that there were other reasons why Lord L'Estrange, whatever be his talents—and of these you must be indeed an adequate judge—would never do anything in public life."

"Ay, and what?" said Egerton, quickly.

"First," said Randal, shrewdly, "private life has done too much for him. What could public life give to one who needs nothing? Born at the top of the social ladder, why should he put himself voluntarily at the last step, for the sake of climbing up again? And secondly, Lord L'Estrange seems to me a man in whose organisation *sentiment* usurps too large a share for practical existence."

"You have a keen eye," said Audley, with some admiration; "keen for one so young.—Poor Harley!"

Mr Egerton's last words were said to himself. He resumed quickly—

"There is something on my mind, my young friend. Let us be frank with each other. I placed before you fairly the advantages and disadvantages of the choice I gave you. To take your degree with such honours as no doubt you would have won, to obtain your fellowship, to go to the bar, with those credentials in favour of your talents;—this was one career. To come at once into public life, to profit by my experience, avail yourself of my interest, to take the chances of rise or fall with a party: this was another. You chose the last. But, in so doing, there was a consideration which might weigh with you; and on which, in stating your reasons for your option, you were silent."

"What is that, sir?"

"You might have counted on my fortune should the chances of party fail you;—speak—and without shame if so; it would be natural in a young man, who comes from the elder branch of the house whose heiress was my wife."

"You wound me, Mr Egerton," said Randal, turning away.

Mr Egerton's cold glance followed Randal's movement; the face was hid from the glance, and the statesman's eye rested on the figure, which is often as self-betraying as the countenance itself. Randal baffled Mr Egerton's penetration—the young man's emotion might be honest pride, and pained and generous feeling; or it might be something else. Egerton continued slowly—

"Once for all then, distinctly and emphatically, I say—never count upon that; count upon all else that I can do for you, and forgive me, when I advise harshly or censure coldly; ascribe this to my interest in your career. Moreover, before decision becomes irrevocable, I wish you to know practically all that is disagreeable or even humiliating in the first subordinate steps of him who, without wealth or station, would rise in public life. I will not consider your choice settled, till the end of a year at least—your name will be kept on the college books till then; if, on experience, you should prefer to return to Oxford, and pursue the slower but surer path to independence and distinction, you can. And now give me your hand, Mr Leslie, in sign that you forgive my bluntness;—it is time to dress."

Randal, with his face still averted, extended his hand. Mr Egerton held it a moment, then dropping it, left the room. Randal turned as the door closed. And there was in his dark face a power of sinister passion, that justified all Harley's warnings. His lips moved, but not audibly; then, as if struck by a sudden thought, he followed Egerton into the hall.

"Sir," said he, "I forgot to say, that on returning from Maida Hill, I took shelter from the rain under a covered passage, and there I met unexpectedly with your nephew, Frank Hazeldean."

"Ah!" said Egerton indifferently, "a fine young man; in the Guards. It is a pity that my brother has such antiquated political notions; he should put his son into parliament, and under my guidance; I could push him. Well, and what said Frank?"

"He invited me to call on him. I remember that you once rather cautioned me against too intimate an acquaintance with those who have not got their fortune to make."

"Because they are idle, and idleness is contagious. Right—better not to be intimate with a young Guardsman."

"Then you would not have me call on him, sir? We were rather friends at Eton; and if I wholly reject his overtures, might he not think that you—"

"I!" interrupted Egerton. "Ah, true; my brother might think I bore him a grudge; absurd. Call then, and ask the young man here. Yet still, I do not advise intimacy."

Egerton turned into his dressing-room. "Sir," said his valet, who was in waiting, "Mr Levy is here—he says, by appointment; and Mr Grinders is also just come from the country."

"Tell Mr Grinders to come in first," said Egerton, seating himself. "You need not wait; I can dress without you. Tell Mr Levy I will see him in five minutes."

Mr Grinders was steward to Audley Egerton.

Mr Levy was a handsome man, who wore a camelia in his button-hole—drove, in his cabriolet, a high-stepping horse that had cost £200; was well known to young men of fashion, and considered by their fathers a very dangerous acquaintance.

CHAPTER XII.

As the company assembled in the drawing-rooms, Mr Egerton introduced Randal Leslie to his eminent friends in a way that greatly contrasted the distant and admonitory manner which he had exhibited to him in private. The presentation was made with that cordiality, and that gracious respect by which those who are in station command notice for those who have their station yet to win.

"My dear Lord, let me introduce to you a kinsman of my late wife's, (in a whisper)—the heir to the elder branch of her family. Stanmore, this is Mr Leslie of whom I spoke to you. You, who were so distinguished at Oxford, will not like him the worse for the prizes he gained there. Duke, let me present to you Mr Leslie. The duchess is angry with me for deserting her balls; I shall hope to make my peace, by providing myself with a younger and livelier substitute. Ah, Mr Howard, here is a young gentleman just fresh from Oxford, who will tell us all about the new sect springing up there. He has not wasted his time on billiards and horses."

Leslie was received with all that charming courtesy which is the *To Kalon* of an aristocracy.

After dinner, conversation settled on politics. Randal listened with attention, and in silence, till Egerton drew him gently out; just enough, and no more—just enough to make his intelligence evident, without subjecting him to the charge of laying down the law. Egerton knew how to draw out young men—a difficult art. It was one reason why he was so peculiarly popular with the more rising members of his party.

The party broke up early.

"We are in time for Almack's," said Egerton, glancing at the clock, "and I have a voucher for you; come."

Randal followed his patron into the carriage. By the way, Egerton thus addressed him:—

"I shall introduce you to the principal leaders of society; know them and study them: I do not advise you to attempt to do more—that is, to attempt to become the fashion. It is a very expensive ambition; some men it helps, most men it ruins. On the whole, you have better cards in your hands. Dance or not as it pleases you—don't flirt. If you flirt, people will inquire into your fortune—an inquiry that will do you little good; and flirting entangles a young man into marrying. That would never do. Here we are."

In two minutes more they were in the great ball-room, and Randal's eyes were dazzled with the lights, the diamonds, the blaze of beauty. Audley presented him in quick succession to some dozen ladies, and then disappeared amidst the crowd. Randal was not at a loss: he was without shyness; or if he had that disabling infirmity, he concealed it. He answered the languid questions put to him, with a certain spirit that kept up talk, and left a favourable impression of his agreeable qualities. But the lady with whom he got on the best, was one who had no daughters out, a handsome and witty woman of the world—Lady Frederick Coniers.

"It is your first ball at Almack's, then, Mr Leslie?"

"My first."

"And you have not secured a partner? Shall I find you one? What do you think of that pretty girl in pink?"

"I see her—but I cannot *think* of her."

"You are rather, perhaps, like a diplomatist in a new court, and your first object is to know who is who."

"I confess that on beginning to study the history of my own day, I should like to distinguish the portraits that illustrate the memoir."

"Give me your arm, then, and we will come into the next room. We shall see the different *notabilités* enter one by one, and observe without being observed. This is the least I can do for a friend of Mr Egerton's."

"Mr Egerton, then," said Randal—(as they threaded their way through the space without the rope that protected the dancers)—"Mr Egerton has had the good fortune to win your esteem, even for his friends, however obscure?"

"Why, to say truth, I think no one whom Mr Egerton calls his friend need long remain obscure, if he has the ambition to be otherwise. For Mr Egerton holds it a maxim never to forget a friend, nor a service."

"Ah, indeed!" said Randal, surprised.

"And, therefore," continued Lady Frederick, "as he passes through life, friends gather round him. He will rise even higher yet. Gratitude, Mr Leslie, is a very good policy."

"Hem," muttered Mr Leslie.

They had now gained the room where tea and bread and butter were the homely refreshments to the *habitués* of what at that day was the most exclusive assembly in London. They ensconced themselves in a corner by a window, and Lady Frederick performed her task of cicerone with lively ease, accompanying each notice of the various persons who passed panoramically before them with sketch and anecdote, sometimes good-natured, generally satirical, always graphic and amusing.

By and by, Frank Hazeldean, having on his arm a young lady of haughty air, and with high though delicate features, came to the tea-table.

"The last new Guardsman," said Lady Frederick; "very handsome, and not yet quite spoiled. But he has got into a dangerous set."

RANDAL.—"The young lady with him is handsome enough to be dangerous."

LADY FREDERICK, (laughing.)—"No danger for him there,—as yet at least. Lady Mary (the Duke of Knaresborough's daughter) is only in her second year. The first year, nothing under an earl; the second, nothing under a baron. It will be full four years before she comes down to a commoner. Mr Hazeldean's danger is of another kind. He lives much with men who are not exactly *mauvais ton*, but certainly not of the best taste. Yet he is very young; he may extricate him-

self—leaving half his fortune behind him. What, he nods to you! You know him?"

"Very well; he is nephew to Mr Egerton."

"Indeed! I did not know that. Hazeldean is a new name in London. I heard his father was a plain country gentleman, of good fortune, but not that he was related to Mr Egerton."

"Half-brother."

"Will Mr Egerton pay the young gentleman's debts? He has no sons himself."

RANDAL.—"Mr Egerton's fortune comes from his wife, from my family—from a Leslie, not from a Hazeldean."

Lady Frederick turned sharply, looked at Randal's countenance with more attention than she had yet vouchsafed to it, and tried to talk of the Leslies. Randal was very short there.

An hour afterwards, Randal, who had not danced, was still in the refreshment-room, but Lady Frederick had long quitted him. He was talking with some old Etonians who had recognised him, when there entered a lady of very remarkable appearance, and a murmur passed through the room as she appeared.

She might be three or four and twenty. She was dressed in black velvet, which contrasted with the alabaster whiteness of her throat and the clear paleness of her complexion, while it set off the diamonds with which she was profusely covered. Her hair was of the deepest jet, and worn simply braided. Her eyes, too, were dark and brilliant, her features regular and striking; but their expression, when in repose, was not prepossessing to such as love modesty and softness in the looks of woman. But when she spoke and smiled, there was so much spirit and vivacity in the countenance, so much fascination in the smile, that all which might before have marred the effect of her beauty, strangely and suddenly disappeared.

"Who is that very handsome woman?" asked Randal.

"An Italian—a Marchesa something," said one of the Etonians.

"Di Negra," suggested another, who had been abroad: "she

is a widow; her husband was of the great Genoese family of Negra—a younger branch of it."

Several men now gathered thickly around the fair Italian. A few ladies of the highest rank spoke to her, but with a more distant courtesy than ladies of high rank usually show to foreigners of such quality as Madame di Negra. Ladies of a rank less elevated seemed rather shy of her;—that might be from jealousy. As Randal gazed at the Marchesa with more admiration than any woman, perhaps, had before excited in him, he heard a voice near him say—

"Oh, Madame di Negra is resolved to settle amongst us, and marry an Englishman."

"If she can find one sufficiently courageous," returned a female voice.

"Well, she is trying hard for Egerton, and he has courage enough for anything."

The female voice replied with a laugh, "Mr Egerton knows the world too well, and has resisted too many temptations, to be—"

"Hush!—there he is."

Egerton came into the room with his usual firm step and erect mien. Randal observed that a quick glance was exchanged between him and the Marchesa; but the Minister passed her by with a bow.

Still Randal watched, and, ten minutes afterwards, Egerton and the Marchesa were seated apart in the very same convenient nook that Randal and Lady Frederick had occupied an hour or so before.

"Is this the reason why Mr Egerton so insultingly warns me against counting on his fortune?" muttered Randal. "Does he mean to marry again?"

Unjust suspicion!—for, at that moment, these were the words that Audley Egerton was dropping forth from his lips of bronze—

"Nay, dear Madam, do not ascribe to my frank admiration more gallantry than it merits. Your conversation charms me, your beauty delights me; your society is as a holiday that I look forward to in the fatigues of my life. But I have done with love, and I shall never marry again."

"You almost pique me into trying to win, in order to reject you," said the Italian, with a flash from her bright eyes.

"I defy even you," answered Audley, with his cold hard smile. "But to return to the point: You have more influence at least over this subtle Ambassador; and the secret we speak of I rely on you to obtain me. Ah, Madam, let us rest friends. You see I have conquered the unjust prejudices against you; you are received and *fetée* everywhere, as becomes your birth and your attractions. Rely on me ever, as I on you. But I shall excite too much envy if I stay here longer, and am vain enough to think that I may injure you if I provoke the gossip of the ill-natured. As the avowed friend, I can serve you—as the supposed lover, No—" Audley rose as he said this, and, standing by the chair, added carelessly, "Apropos, the sum you do me the honour to borrow will be paid to your bankers to-morrow."

"A thousand thanks!—my brother will hasten to repay you."

Audley bowed. "Your brother, I hope, will repay me in person, not before. When does he come?"

"Oh, he has again postponed his visit *to* London; he is so much needed in Vienna. But while we are talking of him, allow me to ask if your friend, Lord L'Estrange, is indeed still so bitter against that poor brother of mine?"

"Still the same."

"It is shameful!" cried the Italian with warmth; "what has my brother ever done to him, that he should actually intrigue against the Count in his own court?"

"Intrigue! I think you wrong Lord L'Estrange; he but represented what he believed to be the truth, in defence of a ruined exile."

"And you will not tell me where that exile is, or if his daughter still lives?"

"My dear Marchesa, I have called you friend, therefore I will not aid L'Estrange to injure you or yours. But I call L'Estrange a friend also; and I cannot violate the trust that—" Audley stopped short, and bit his lip. "You understand me," he

resumed, with a more genial smile than usual; and he took his leave.

The Italian's brows met as her eye followed him; then, as she too rose, that eye encountered Randal's.

"That young man has the eye of an Italian," said the Marchesa to herself, as she passed by him into the ball-room.

CHAPTER XIII.

Leonard and Helen settled themselves in two little chambers in a small lane. The neighbourhood was dull enough — the accommodation humble; but their landlady had a smile. That was the reason, perhaps, why Helen chose the lodgings: a smile is not always found on the face of a landlady when the lodger is poor. And out of their windows they caught sight of a green tree, an elm, that grew up fair and tall in a carpenter's yard at the rear. That tree was like another smile to the place. They saw the birds come and go to its shelter; and they even heard, when a breeze arose, the pleasant murmur of its boughs.

Leonard went the same evening to Captain Digby's old lodgings, but he could learn there no intelligence of friends or protectors for Helen. The people were rude and surly, and said that the Captain still owed them £1, 17s. The claim, however, seemed very disputable, and was stoutly denied by Helen. The next morning Leonard set off in search of Dr Morgan. He thought his best plan was to inquire the address of the Doctor at the nearest chemist's, and the chemist civilly looked into the *Court Guide*, and referred him to a house in Bulstrode Street, Manchester Square. To this street Leonard contrived to find his way, much marvelling at the meanness of London: Screwstown seemed to him the handsomer town of the two.

A shabby man-servant opened the door, and Leonard remarked that the narrow passage was choked with boxes, trunks, and various articles of furniture. He was shown into a small room, containing a very large round table, whereon were sundry works on homœopathy, Parry's *Cymbrian Plutarch*, Davies' *Celtic*

Researches, and a Sunday newspaper. An engraved portrait of the illustrious Hahnemann occupied the place of honour over the chimneypiece. In a few minutes the door to an inner room opened, and Dr Morgan appeared, and said politely "Come in, sir."

The Doctor seated himself at a desk, looked hastily at Leonard, and then at a great chronometer lying on the table. "My time's short, sir — going abroad; and now that I am going, patients flock to me. Too late. London will repent its apathy. Let it!"

The Doctor paused majestically, and not remarking on Leonard's face the consternation he had anticipated, he repeated peevishly—"I am going abroad, sir, but I will make a synopsis of your case, and leave it to my successor. Hum! Hair chestnut; eyes — what colour? Look this way — blue, dark blue. Hem! Constitution nervous. What are the symptoms?"

"Sir," began Leonard, "a little girl—"

Dr Morgan, (impatiently.)—"Little girl! Never mind the history of your sufferings; stick to the symptoms—stick to the symptoms."

Leonard.—"You mistake me, Doctor; I have nothing the matter with me. A little girl—"

Dr Morgan.—"Girl again! I understand! it is she who is ill. Shall I go to her? She must describe her own symptoms —I can't judge from your talk. You'll be telling me she has consumption, or dyspepsia, or some such disease that don't exist: mere allopathic inventions — symptoms, sir, symptoms."

Leonard, (forcing his way.)—"You attended her poor father, Captain Digby, when he was taken ill in the coach with you. He is dead, and his child is an orphan."

Dr Morgan, (fumbling in his medical pocket-book.)—"Orphan! nothing for orphans, especially if inconsolable, like *aconite* and *chamomilla*." *

With some difficulty Leonard succeeded in bringing Helen

* It may be necessary to observe, that homœopathy professes to deal with our moral affections as well as with our physical maladies, and has a globule for every sorrow.

to the recollection of the homœopathist, stating how he came in charge of her, and why he sought Dr Morgan.

The doctor was much moved.

"But, really," said he after a pause, "I don't see how I can help the poor child. I know nothing of her relations. This Lord Les — whatever his name is — I know of no lords in London. I knew lords, and physicked them too, when I was a blundering allopathist. There was the Earl of Lansmere—has had many a blue pill from me, sinner that I was. His son was wiser; never would take physic. Very clever boy was Lord L'Estrange—"

"Lord L'Estrange!—that name begins with Les—"

"Stuff! He's always abroad—shows his sense. I'm going abroad too. No development for science in this horrid city—full of prejudices, sir, and given up to the most barbarous allopathical and phlebotomical propensities. I am going to the land of Hahnemann, sir,—sold my good-will, lease, and furniture, and have bought in on the Rhine. Natural life there, sir—homœopathy needs nature: dine at one o'clock, get up at four—tea little known, and science appreciated. But I forget. Cott! what can I do for the orphan?"

"Well, sir," said Leonard rising, "Heaven will give me strength to support her."

The Doctor looked at the young man attentively. "And yet," said he, in a gentler voice, "you, young man, are, by your account, a perfect stranger to her, or were so when you undertook to bring her to London. You have a good heart—always keep it. Very healthy thing, sir, a good heart—that is, when not carried to excess. But you have friends of your own in town?"

LEONARD.—"Not yet, sir; I hope to make them."

DOCTOR.—"Pless me, you do? How?—I can't make any."

Leonard coloured and hung his head. He longed to say "Authors find friends in their readers—I am going to be an author." But he felt that the reply would savour of presumption, and held his tongue.

The Doctor continued to examine him, and with friendly

interest. "You say you walked up to London—was that from choice or economy?"

LEONARD.—"Both, sir."

DOCTOR.—"Sit down again, and let us talk. I can give you a quarter of an hour, and I'll see if I *can* help either of you, provided you tell me all the symptoms—I mean all the particulars."

Then, with that peculiar adroitness which belongs to experience in the medical profession, Dr Morgan, who was really an acute and able man, proceeded to put his questions, and soon extracted from Leonard the boy's history and hopes. But when the Doctor, in admiration at a simplicity which contrasted so evident an intelligence, finally asked him his name and connections, and Leonard told them, the homœopathist actually started. "Leonard Fairfield, grandson of my old friend, John Avenel of Lansmere! I must shake you by the hand. Brought up by Mrs Fairfield!—Ah, now I look, strong family likeness—very strong!"

The tears stood in the Doctor's eyes. "Poor Nora!" said he.

"Nora! Did you know my aunt?"

"Your aunt! Ah—ah! yes—yes! Poor Nora!—she died almost in these arms—so young, so beautiful. I remember it as if yesterday."

The Doctor brushed his hand across his eyes, and swallowed a globule; and, before the boy knew what he was about, had in his benevolence thrust another between Leonard's quivering lips.

A knock was heard at the door.

"Ha! that's my great patient," cried the Doctor, recovering his self-possession—"must see him. A chronic case—excellent patient—tic, sir, tic. Puzzling and interesting. If I could take that tic with me, I should ask nothing more from Heaven. Call again on Monday; I may have something to tell you then as to yourself. The little girl can't stay with you—wrong and nonsensical. I will see after her. Leave me your address—write it here. I think I know a lady who will take charge of her. Good-bye. Monday next, ten o'clock."

With this, the Doctor thrust out Leonard, and ushered in his

grand patient, whom he was very anxious to take with him to the banks of the Rhine.

Leonard had now only to discover the nobleman whose name had been so vaguely uttered by poor Captain Digby. He had again recourse to the *Court Guide;* and finding the address of two or three lords the first syllable of whose titles seemed similar to that repeated to him, and all living pretty near to each other, in the regions of May Fair, he ascertained his way to that quarter, and, exercising his mother-wit, inquired at the neighbouring shops as to the personal appearance of these noblemen. Out of consideration for his rusticity, he got very civil and clear answers; but none of the lords in question corresponded with the description given by Helen. One was old, another was exceedingly corpulent, a third was bedridden—none of them was known to keep a great dog. It is needless to say that the name of L'Estrange (no habitant of London) was not in the *Court Guide.* And Dr Morgan's assertion that that person was always abroad unluckily dismissed from Leonard's mind the name the homœopathist had so casually mentioned. But Helen was not disappointed when her young protector returned late in the day, and told her of his ill success. Poor child! she was so pleased in her heart not to be separated from her new brother; and Leonard was touched to see how she had contrived, in his absence, to give a certain comfort and cheerful grace to the bare room devoted to himself. She had arranged his few books and papers so neatly, near the window, in sight of the one green elm. She had coaxed the smiling landlady out of one or two extra articles of furniture, especially a walnut-tree bureau, and some odds and ends of ribbon—with which last she had looped up the curtains. Even the old rush-bottom chairs had a strange air of elegance, from the mode in which they were placed. The fairies had given sweet Helen the art that adorns a home, and brings out a smile from the dingiest corner of hut and attic.

Leonard wondered and praised. He kissed his blushing ministrant gratefully, and they sate down in joy to their abstemious meal; when suddenly his face was overclouded—there shot through him the remembrance of Dr Morgan's words—

"The little girl can't stay with you—wrong and nonsensical. I think I know a lady who will take charge of her."

"Ah," cried Leonard, sorrowfully, "how could I forget?" And he told Helen what grieved him. Helen at first exclaimed "that she would not go." Leonard, rejoiced, then began to talk as usual of his great prospects; and, hastily finishing his meal, as if there were no time to lose, sate down at once to his papers. Then Helen contemplated him sadly, as he bent over his delighted work. And when, lifting his radiant eyes from his manuscripts, he exclaimed, "No, no, you shall *not* go. *This* must succeed—and we shall live together in some pretty cottage, where we can see more than one tree"—*then* Helen sighed, and did not answer this time, "No, I will not go."

Shortly after she stole from the room, and into her own; and there, kneeling down, she prayed, and her prayer was somewhat this—"Guard me against my own selfish heart: may I never be a burden to him who has shielded me."

Perhaps, as the Creator looks down on this world, whose wondrous beauty beams on us more and more, in proportion as our science would take it from poetry into law—perhaps He beholds nothing so beautiful as the pure heart of a simple loving child.

CHAPTER XIV.

Leonard went out the next day with his precious manuscripts. He had read sufficient of modern literature to know the names of the principal London publishers; and to these he took his way with a bold step, though a beating heart.

That day he was out longer than the last; and when he returned, and came into the little room, Helen uttered a cry, for she scarcely recognised him. There was on his face so deep, so silent, and so concentrated a despondency. He sate down listlessly, and did not kiss her this time, as she stole towards him. He felt so humbled. He was a king deposed. *He* take charge of another life! He!

She coaxed him at last into communicating his day's chronicle. The reader beforehand knows too well what it must be, to need detailed repetition. Most of the publishers had absolutely refused to look at his manuscripts; one or two had good-naturedly glanced over and returned them at once, with a civil word or two of flat rejection. One publisher alone—himself a man of letters, and who in youth had gone through the same bitter process of disillusion that now awaited the village genius—volunteered some kindly though stern explanation and counsel to the unhappy boy. This gentleman read a portion of Leonard's principal poem with attention, and even with frank admiration. He could appreciate the rare promise that it manifested. He sympathised with the boy's history, and even with his hopes; and then he said, in bidding him farewell—

"If I publish this poem for you, speaking as a trader, I shall be a considerable loser. Did I publish all I admire, out of sympathy with the author, I should be a ruined man. But

suppose that, impressed as I really am with the evidence of no common poetic gifts in this manuscript, I publish it, not as a trader, but a lover of literature, I shall in reality, I fear, render you a great disservice, and perhaps unfit your whole life for the exertions on which you must rely for independence."

"How, sir?" cried Leonard.—"Not that I would ask you to injure yourself for me," he added, with proud tears in his eyes.

"How, my young friend? I will explain. There is enough talent in these verses to induce very flattering reviews in some of the literary journals. You will read these, find yourself proclaimed a poet, will cry 'I am on the road to fame.' You will come to me, 'And my poem, how does it sell?' I shall point to some groaning shelf, and say, 'Not twenty copies!' The journals may praise, but the public will not buy it. 'But you will have got a name,' you say. Yes, a name as a poet just sufficiently known to make every man in practical business disinclined to give fair trial to your talents in a single department of positive life;—none like to employ poets;—a name that will not put a penny in your purse—worse still, that will operate as a barrier against every escape into the ways whereby men get to fortune. But, having once tasted praise, you will continue to sigh for it: you will perhaps never again get a publisher to bring forth a poem, but you will hanker round the purlieus of the Muses, scribble for periodicals—fall at last into a bookseller's drudge. Profits will be so precarious and uncertain, that to avoid debt may be impossible; then, you who now seem so ingenuous and so proud, will sink deeper still into the literary mendicant—begging, borrowing—"

"Never—never—never!" cried Leonard, veiling his face with his hands.

"Such would have been my career," continued the publisher. "But I luckily had a rich relative, a trader, whose calling I despised as a boy, who kindly forgave my folly, bound me as an apprentice, and here I am; and now I can afford to write books as well as sell them.

"Young man, you must have respectable relations—go by their advice and counsel; cling fast to some positive calling. Be anything in this city rather than poet by profession."

"And how, sir, have there ever been poets? Had *they* other callings?"

"Read their biography, and then—envy them!"

Leonard was silent a moment; but, lifting his head, answered loud and quickly,—"I *have* read their biography. True, their lot was poverty—perhaps hunger. Sir, I—envy them!"

"Poverty and hunger are small evils," answered the bookseller, with a grave kind smile. "There are worse,—debt and degradation, and—despair."

"No, sir, no—you exaggerate; these last are not the lot of all poets."

"Right, for most of our greatest poets had some private means of their own. And for others—why, all who have put into a lottery have not drawn blanks. But who could advise another man to set his whole hope of fortune on the chance of a prize in a lottery? And such a lottery!" groaned the publisher, glancing towards sheets and reams of dead authors' lying like lead upon his shelves.

Leonard clutched his manuscripts to his heart, and hurried away.

"Yes," he muttered, as Helen clung to him, and tried to console—"yes, you were right: London is very vast, very strong, and very cruel;" and his head sank lower and lower yet upon his bosom.

The door was flung widely open, and in, unannounced, walked Dr Morgan.

The child turned to him, and at the sight of his face she remembered her father; and the tears that, for Leonard's sake, she had been trying to suppress, found way.

The good Doctor soon gained all the confidence of these two young hearts. And after listening to Leonard's story of his paradise lost in a day, he patted him on the shoulder and said, "Well, you will call on me on Monday, and we will see. Meanwhile, borrow these of me;"—and he tried to slip three sovereigns into the boy's hand. Leonard was indignant. The bookseller's warning flashed on him. Mendicancy! Oh no, he had not yet come to that! He was almost rude and savage in his rejection; and the Doctor did not like him the less for it.

"You are an obstinate mule," said the homœopathist, reluctantly putting up his sovereigns. "Will you work at something practical and prosy, and let the poetry rest awhile?"

"Yes," said Leonard doggedly, "I will work."

"Very well, then. I know an honest bookseller, and he shall give you some employment; and meanwhile, at all events, you will be among books, and that will be some comfort."

Leonard's eyes brightened—"A great comfort, sir." He pressed the hand he had before put aside to his grateful heart.

"But," resumed the Doctor seriously, "you really feel a strong predisposition to make verses?"

"I did, sir."

"Very bad symptom indeed, and must be stopped before a relapse! Here, I have cured three prophets and ten poets with this novel specific."

While thus speaking, he had got out his book and a globule. "*Agaricus muscarius* dissolved in a tumbler of distilled water—tea-spoonful whenever the fit comes on. Sir, it would have cured Milton himself.

"And now for you, my child," turning to Helen—"I have found a lady who will be very kind to you. Not a menial situation. She wants some one to read to her, and tend on her—she is old, and has no children. She wants a companion, and prefers a girl of your age to one older. Will this suit you?"

Leonard walked away.

Helen got close to the Doctor's ear, and whispered, "No, I cannot leave *him* now—he is so sad."

"Cott!" grunted the Doctor, "you two must have been reading *Paul and Virginia*. If I could but stay in England, I would try what *ignatia* would do in this case—interesting experiment! Listen to me—little girl; and go out of the room, you, sir."

Leonard, averting his face, obeyed. Helen made an involuntary step after him—the Doctor detained and drew her on his knee.

"What's your Christian name?—I forget."

"Helen."

"Helen, listen. In a year or two you will be a young woman,

and it would be very wrong then to live alone with that young man. Meanwhile, you have no right to cripple all his energies. He must not have you leaning on his right arm—you would weigh it down. I am going away, and when I am gone there will be no one to help you, if you reject the friend I offer you. Do as I tell you, for a little girl so peculiarly susceptible (a thorough *pulsatilla* constitution) cannot be obstinate and egotistical."

"Let me see him cared for and happy, sir," said she firmly, "and I will go where you wish."

"He shall be so; and to-morrow, while he is out, I will come and fetch you. Nothing so painful as leave-taking—shakes the nervous system, and is a mere waste of the animal economy."

Helen sobbed aloud; then, writhing from the Doctor, she exclaimed, "But he may know where I am? We may see each other sometimes? Ah, sir, it was at my father's grave that we first met, and I think Heaven sent him to me. Do not part us for ever."

"I should have a heart of stone if I did," cried the Doctor vehemently; "and Miss Starke shall let him come and visit you once a-week. I'll give her something to make her. She is naturally indifferent to others. I will alter her whole constitution, and melt her into sympathy—with *rhododendron* and *arsenic!*"

CHAPTER XV.

Before he went, the Doctor wrote a line to "Mr Prickett, Bookseller, Holborn," and told Leonard to take it, the next morning, as addressed. "I will call on Prickett myself to-night, and prepare him for your visit. But I hope and trust you will only have to stay there a few days."

He then turned the conversation, to communicate his plans for Helen. Miss Starke lived at Highgate—a worthy woman, stiff and prim, as old maids sometimes are. But just the place for a little girl like Helen, and Leonard should certainly be allowed to call and see her.

Leonard listened and made no opposition ;—now that his day-dream was dispelled, he had no right to pretend to be Helen's protector. He could have prayed her to share his wealth and his fame ; his penury and his drudgery—no.

It was a very sorrowful evening—that between the adventurer and the child. They sate up late, till their candle had burned down to the socket ; neither did they talk much ; but his hand clasped hers all the time, and her head pillowed itself on his shoulder. I fear, when they parted, it was not for sleep.

And when Leonard went forth the next morning, Helen stood at the street door, watching him depart—slowly, slowly. No doubt, in that humble lane there were many sad hearts ; but no heart so heavy as that of the still, quiet child, when the form she had watched was to be seen no more, and, still standing on the desolate threshold, she gazed into space—and all was vacant.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr Prickett was a believer in homœopathy, and declared, to the indignation of all the apothecaries round Holborn, that he had been cured of a chronic rheumatism by Dr Morgan. The good Doctor had, as he promised, seen Mr Prickett when he left Leonard, and asked him as a favour to find some light occupation for the boy, that would serve as an excuse for a modest weekly salary. "It will not be for long," said the Doctor; "his relations are respectable and well off. I will write to his grandparents, and in a few days I hope to relieve you of the charge. Of course, if you don't want him, I will repay what he costs meanwhile."

Mr Prickett, thus prepared for Leonard, received him very graciously, and, after a few questions, said Leonard was just the person he wanted to assist him in cataloguing his books, and offered him most handsomely £1 a-week for the task.

Plunged at once into a world of books vaster than he had ever before won admission to, that old divine dream of knowledge, out of which poetry had sprung, returned to the village student at the very sight of the venerable volumes. The collection of Mr Prickett was, however, in reality by no means large; but it comprised not only the ordinary standard works, but several curious and rare ones. And Leonard paused in making the catalogue, and took many a hasty snatch of the contents of each tome, as it passed through his hands. The bookseller, who was an enthusiast for old books, was pleased to see a kindred feeling (which his shopboy had never exhibited) in his new assistant; and he talked about rare editions and scarce copies, and initiated Leonard into many of the mysteries of the bibliographist.

Nothing could be more dark and dingy than the shop. There was a booth outside, containing cheap books and odd volumes. round which there was always an attentive group; within, a gas-lamp burned night and day.

But time passed quickly to Leonard. He missed not the green fields, he forgot his disappointments, he ceased to remember even Helen. O strange passion of knowledge! nothing like thee for strength and devotion.

Mr Prickett was a bachelor, and asked Leonard to dine with him on a cold shoulder of mutton. During dinner the shop-boy kept the shop, and Mr Prickett was really pleasant as well as loquacious. He took a liking to Leonard—and Leonard told him his adventures with the publishers, at which Mr Prickett rubbed his hands and laughed as at a capital joke. "Oh, give up poetry, and stick to a shop," cried he; "and, to cure you for ever of the mad whim to be author, I'll just lend you the *Life and Works of Chatterton*. You may take it home with you and read before you go to bed. You'll come back quite a new man to-morrow."

Not till night, when the shop was closed, did Leonard return to his lodging. And when he entered the room, he was struck to the soul by the silence, by the void. Helen was gone!

There was a rose-tree in its pot on the table at which he wrote, and by it a scrap of paper, on which was written—

"Dear, dear Brother Leonard, God bless you. I will let you know when we can meet again. Take care of this rose, Brother, and don't forget poor HELEN."

Over the word "forget" there was a big round blistered spot that nearly effaced the word.

Leonard leant his face on his hands, and for the first time in his life he felt what solitude really is. He could not stay long in the room. He walked out again, and wandered objectless to and fro the streets. He passed that stiller and humbler neighbourhood, he mixed with the throng that swarmed in the more populous thoroughfares. Hundreds and thousands passed him by, and still—still such solitude.

He came back, lighted his candle, and resolutely drew forth the "Chatterton" which the bookseller had lent him. It was an old edition in one thick volume. It had evidently belonged to some contemporary of the Poet's—apparently an inhabitant of Bristol—some one who had gathered up many anecdotes respecting Chatterton's habits, and who appeared even to have seen him, nay, been in his company; for the book was interleaved, and the leaves covered with notes and remarks in a stiff clear hand—all evincing personal knowledge of the mournful immortal dead. At first, Leonard read with an effort; then the strange and fierce spell of that dread life seized upon him—seized with pain, and gloom, and terror—this boy dying by his own hand, about the age Leonard had attained himself. This wondrous boy, of a genius beyond all comparison—the greatest that ever yet was developed and extinguished at the age of eighteen — self-taught — self-struggling — self-immolated. Nothing in literature like that life and that death!

With intense interest Leonard perused the tale of the brilliant imposture, which had been so harshly and so absurdly construed into the crime of a forgery, and which was (if not wholly innocent) so akin to the literary devices always in other cases viewed with indulgence, and exhibiting, in this, intellectual qualities in themselves so amazing—such patience, such forethought, such labour, such courage, such ingenuity—the qualities that, well directed, make men great, not only in books, but action. And, turning from the history of the imposture to the poems themselves, the young reader bent before their beauty, literally awed and breathless. How had this strange Bristol boy tamed and mastered his rude and motley materials into a music that comprehended every tune and key, from the simplest to the sublimest? He turned back to the biography—he read on—he saw the proud, daring, mournful spirit, alone in the Great City like himself. He followed its dismal career, he saw it falling with bruised and soiled wings into the mire. He turned again to the later works, wrung forth as tasks for bread,—the satires without moral grandeur, the politics without honest faith. He shuddered and sickened as he read. True, even here his poet mind appreciated (what perhaps only poets can)—the divine

fire that burned fitfully through that meaner and more sordid fuel—he still traced in those crude, hasty, bitter offerings to dire Necessity, the hand of the young giant who had built up the stately verse of Rowley. But, alas! how different from that "mighty line." How all serenity and joy had fled from these later exercises of art degraded into journey-work. Then rapidly came on the catastrophe—the closed doors—the poison—the suicide—the manuscripts torn by the hands of despairing wrath, and strewed round the corpse upon the funeral floors. It was terrible! The spectre of the Titan boy, (as described in the notes written on the margin,) with his haughty brow, his cynic smile, his lustrous eyes, haunted all the night the baffled and solitary child of song.

CHAPTER XVII.

It will often happen that what ought to turn the human mind from some peculiar tendency produces the opposite effect. One would think that the perusal in the newspaper of some crime and capital punishment would warn away all who had ever meditated the crime, or dreaded the chance of detection. Yet it is well known to us that many a criminal is made by pondering over the fate of some predecessor in guilt. There is a fascination in the Dark and Forbidden, which, strange to say, is only lost in fiction. No man is more inclined to murder his nephews, or stifle his wife, after reading "Richard the Third" or "Othello." It is the *reality* that is necessary to constitute the danger of contagion. Now, it was this reality in the fate, and life, and crowning suicide of Chatterton, that forced itself upon Leonard's thoughts, and sate there like a visible evil thing, gathering evil like cloud around it. There was much in the dead poet's character, his trials, and his doom, that stood out to Leonard like a bold and colossal shadow of himself and his fate. Alas! the bookseller, in one respect, had said truly. Leonard came back to him the next day a new man; and it seemed even to himself as if he had lost a good angel in losing Helen. "Oh that she had been by my side," thought he. "Oh that I could have felt the touch of her confiding hand—that, looking up from the scathed and dreary ruin of this life, that had sublimely lifted itself from the plain, and sought to tower aloft from a deluge, her mild look had spoken to me of innocent, humble, unaspiring childhood! Ah! If indeed I were still necessary

to her—still the sole guardian and protector—then could I say to myself, 'Thou must not despair and die! Thou hast her to live and to strive for.' But no, no! Only this vast and terrible London—the solitude of the dreary garret, and those lustrous eyes glaring alike through the throng and through the solitude."

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the following Monday, Dr Morgan's shabby man-servant opened the door to a young man in whom he did not at first remember a former visitor. A few days before, embrowned with healthful travel—serene light in his eye, simple trust in his careless lip—Leonard Fairfield had stood at that threshold. Now again he stood there, pale and haggard, with a cheek already hollowed into those deep anxious lines that speak of working thoughts and sleepless nights; and a settled sullen gloom resting heavily on his whole aspect.

"I call by appointment," said the boy testily, as the servant stood irresolute. The man gave way. "Master is just called out to a patient: please to wait, sir;" and he showed him into the little parlour. In a few moments two other patients were admitted. These were women, and they began talking very loud. They disturbed Leonard's unsocial thoughts. He saw that the door into the Doctor's receiving-room was half open, and, ignorant of the etiquette which holds such *penetralia* as sacred, he walked in to escape from the gossips. He threw himself into the Doctor's own well-worn chair, and muttered to himself, "Why did he tell me to come?—What new can he think of for me? And if a favour, should I take it? He has given me the means of bread by work: that is all I have a right to ask from him, from any man—all I should accept."

While thus soliloquising, his eye fell on a letter lying open on the table. He started. He recognised the handwriting—the same as that of the letter which had enclosed £50 to his mother—the letter of his grandparents. He saw his own name: he saw something more—words that made his heart stand still, and

his blood seem like ice in his veins. As he thus stood aghast, a hand was laid on the letter, and a voice, in an angry growl, muttered, "How dare you come into my room, and pe reading my letters? Er—r—r!"

Leonard placed his own hand on the Doctor's firmly, and said in a fierce tone, "This letter relates to me—belongs to me—crushes me. I have seen enough to know that. I demand to read all—learn all."

The Doctor looked round, and seeing the door into the waiting-room still open, kicked it to with his foot, and then said, under his breath, "What have you read? Tell me the truth."

"Two lines only, and I am called—I am called"—Leonard's frame shook from head to foot, and the veins on his forehead swelled like cords. He could not complete the sentence. It seemed as if an ocean was rolling up through his brain, and roaring in his ears. The Doctor saw, at a glance, that there was physical danger in his state, and hastily and soothingly answered,—"Sit down, sit down—calm yourself—you shall know all—read all—drink this water;" and he poured into a tumbler of the pure liquid a drop or two from a tiny phial.

Leonard obeyed mechanically, for he was no longer able to stand. He closed his eyes, and for a minute or two life seemed to pass from him; then he recovered, and saw the good Doctor's gaze fixed on him with great compassion. He silently stretched forth his hand towards the letter. "Wait a few moments," said the physician judiciously, "and hear me meanwhile. It is very unfortunate you should have seen a letter never meant for your eye, and containing allusions to a secret you were never to have known. But, if I tell you more, will you promise me, on your word of honour, that you will hold the confidence sacred from Mrs Fairfield, the Avenels—from all? I myself am pledged to conceal a secret, which I can only share with you on the same condition."

"There is nothing," announced Leonard indistinctly, and with a bitter smile on his lip,—"nothing, it seems, that I should be proud to boast of. Yes, I promise—the letter, the letter!"

The Doctor placed it in Leonard's right hand, and quietly slipped to the wrist of the left his forefinger and thumb, as

physicians are said to do when a victim is stretched on the rack. "Pulse decreasing," he muttered; "wonderful thing, *Aconite!*" Meanwhile Leonard read as follows, faults in spelling and all:—

"Dr Morgan.

"Sir,—I received your favur duly, and am glad to hear that the pore boy is safe and Well. But he has been behaving ill, and ungrateful to my good son Richard, who is a credit to the whole Famuly, and has made himself a Gentleman, and Was very kind and good to the boy, not knowing who and What he is—God forbid! I don't want never to see him again —the boy. Pore John was ill and Restless for days afterwards. John is a pore cretur now, and has had paralytiks. And he Talked of nothing but Nora—the boy's eyes were so like his Mother's. I cannot, cannot see the Child of Shame. He can't cum here—for our Lord's sake, sir, don't ask it—he can't, so Respectable as we've always been!—and such disgrace! Base born—base born. Keep him where he is bind him prentis, I'll pay anything for That. You says, sir, he's clever, and quick at learning; so did Parson Dale, and wanted him to go to Collidge and make a Figur—then all would cum out. It would be my death, sir; I could not sleep in my grave, sir. Nora that we were all so proud of. Sinful creturs that we are! Nora's good name that we've saved now, gone, gone. And Richard, who is so grand, and who was so fond of pore, pore Nora! He would not hold up his Head again. Don't let him make a Figur in the world—let him be a tradesman, as we were afore him—any trade he Takes to—and not cross us no more while he lives. Then I shall pray for him, and wish him happy. And have not we had enuff of bringing up children to be above their birth? Nora, that I used to say was like the first lady o' the land—oh, but we were rightly punished! So now, sir, I leave all to you, and will Pay all you want for the boy. And be Sure that the secret's kept. For we have never heard from the father, and, at leest, no one knows that Nora has a living son but I and my daughter Jane, and Parson Dale and you—and you Two are good Gentlemen—and Jane will keep her word, and I am old,

and shall be in my grave Soon, but I hope it won't be while pore John needs me. What could he do without me? And if *that* got wind, it would kill me straght, sir. Pore John is a helpless cretur, God bliss him. So no more from your servant in all dooty, M. AVENEL."

Leonard laid down this letter very calmly, and, except by a slight heaving at his breast, and a deathlike whiteness of his lips, the emotions he felt were undetected. And it is a proof how much exquisite goodness there was in his heart that the first words he spoke were, "Thank Heaven!"

The Doctor did not expect that thanksgiving, and he was so startled that he exclaimed, "For what?"

"I have nothing to pity or excuse in the woman I knew and honoured as a mother. I am not her son—her—"

He stopped short.

"No; but don't be hard on your true mother—poor Nora!"

Leonard staggered, and then burst into a sudden paroxysm of tears.

"Oh, my own mother!—my dead mother! Thou for whom I felt so mysterious a love—thou, from whom I took this poet soul—pardon me, pardon me! Hard on thee! Would that thou wert living yet, that I might comfort thee! What thou must have suffered!"

These words were sobbed forth in broken gasps from the depth of his heart. Then he caught up the letter again, and his thoughts were changed as his eyes fell upon the writer's shame and fear, as it were, of his very existence. All his native haughtiness returned to him. His crest rose, his tears dried. "Tell her," he said, with a stern unfaltering voice—"tell Mrs Avenel that she is obeyed—that I will never seek her roof, never cross her path, never disgrace her wealthy son. But tell her, also, that I will choose my own way in life—that I will not take from her a bribe for concealment. Tell her that I am nameless, and will yet make a name."

A name! Was this but an idle boast, or was it one of those flashes of conviction which are never belied, lighting up our future for one lurid instant, and then fading into darkness?

"I do not doubt it, my prave poy," said Dr Morgan, growing exceedingly Welsh in his excitement; "and perhaps you may find a father, who—"

"Father—who is he—what is he? He lives, then! But he has deserted me—he must have betrayed her! I need him not. The law gives me no father."

The last words were said with a return of bitter anguish; then, in a calmer tone, he resumed, "But I should know who he is—as another one whose path I may not cross."

Dr Morgan looked embarrassed, and paused in deliberation. "Nay," said he at length, "as you know so much, it is surely best that you should know all."

The Doctor then proceeded to detail, with some circumlocution, what we will here repeat from his account more succinctly.

Nora Avenel, while yet very young, left her native village, or rather the house of Lady Lansmere, by whom she had been educated and brought up, in order to accept the place of companion to a lady in London. One evening she suddenly presented herself at her father's house, and at the first sight of her mother's face she fell down insensible. She was carried to bed. Dr Morgan (then the chief medical practitioner of the town) was sent for. That night Leonard came into the world, and his mother died. She never recovered her senses, never spoke intelligibly from the time she entered the house. "And never, therefore, named your father," said Dr Morgan. "We knew not who he was."

"And how," cried Leonard, fiercely—"how have they dared to slander this dead mother? How knew they that I—was—was—was not the child of wedlock?"

"There was no wedding-ring on Nora's finger—never any rumour of her marriage—her strange and sudden appearance at her father's house—her emotions on entrance, so unlike those natural to a wife returning to a parent's home: these are all the evidence against her. But Mrs Avenel deemed them strong, and so did I. You have a right to think we judged too harshly—perhaps we did."

"And no inquiries were ever made?" said Leonard mourn-

fully, and after long silence—"no inquiries to learn who was the father of the motherless child?"

"Inquiries!—Mrs Avenel would have died first. Your grandmother's nature is very rigid. Had she come from princes, from Cadwallader himself," said the Welshman, "she could not more have shrunk from the thought of dishonour. Even over her dead child, the child she had loved the best, she thought but how to save that child's name and memory from suspicion. There was luckily no servant in the house, only Mark Fairfield and his wife, (Nora's sister:) they had arrived the same day on a visit.

"Mrs Fairfield was nursing her own infant, two or three months old; she took charge of you; Nora was buried, and the secret kept. None out of the family knew of it, but myself and the curate of the town—Mr Dale. The day after your birth, Mrs Fairfield, to prevent discovery, moved to a village at some distance. There her child died; and when she returned to Hazeldean, where her husband was settled, you passed as the son she had lost. Mark, I know, was as a father to you, for he had loved Nora: they had been children together."

"And she came to London—London is strong and cruel," muttered Leonard. "She was friendless and deceived. I see all—I desire to know no more. This father, he must indeed have been like those whom I have read of in books. To love, to wrong her—*that* I can conceive; but then to leave, to abandon; no visit to her grave—no remorse—no search for his own child. Well, well; Mrs Avenel was right. Let us think of *him* no more."

The man-servant knocked at the door, and then put in his head. "Sir, the ladies are getting very impatient, and say they'll go."

"Sir," said Leonard, with a strange calm return to the things about him, "I ask your pardon for taking up your time so long. I go now. I will never mention to my moth—I mean to Mrs Fairfield—what I have learned, nor to any one. I will work my way somehow. If Mr Prickett will keep me, I will stay with him at present; but I repeat, I cannot take Mrs Avenel's money and be bound apprentice.

Sir, you have been good and patient with me — Heaven reward you."

The Doctor was too moved to answer. He wrung Leonard's hand, and in another minute the door closed upon the nameless boy. He stood alone in the streets of London; and the sun flashed on him, red and menacing, like the eye of a foe!

CHAPTER XIX.

Leonard did not appear at the shop of Mr Prickett that day. Needless it is to say where he wandered—what he suffered—what thought—what felt. All within was storm. Late at night he returned to his solitary lodging. On his table, neglected since the morning, was Helen's rose-tree. It looked parched and fading. His heart smote him: he watered the poor plant—perhaps with his tears.

Meanwhile Dr Morgan, after some debate with himself whether or not to apprise Mrs Avenel of Leonard's discovery and message, resolved to spare her an uneasiness and alarm that might be dangerous to her health, and unnecessary in itself. He replied shortly, that she need not fear Leonard's coming to her house—that he was disinclined to bind himself an apprentice, but that he was provided for at present; and in a few weeks, when Dr Morgan heard more of him through the tradesman by whom he was employed, the Doctor would write to her from Germany. He then went to Mr Prickett's—told the willing bookseller to keep the young man for the present—to be kind to him, watch over his habits and conduct, and report to the Doctor in his new home, on the Rhine, what avocation he thought Leonard would be best suited for, and most inclined to adopt. The charitable Welshman divided with the bookseller the salary given to Leonard, and left a quarter of his moiety in advance. It is true that he knew he should be repaid on applying to Mrs Avenel; but, being a man of independent spirit himself, he so sympathised with Leonard's present feelings, that he felt as if he should degrade the boy did he maintain him, even secretly, out of Mrs Avenel's money—money intended not

to raise, but keep him down in life. At the worst, it was a sum the Doctor could afford, and he had brought the boy into the world.

Having thus, as he thought, safely provided for his two young charges, Helen and Leonard, the Doctor then gave himself up to his final preparations for departure. He left a short note for Leonard with Mr Prickett, containing some brief advice, some kind cheering; a postscript to the effect that he had not communicated to Mrs Avenel the information Leonard had acquired, and that it were best to leave her in that ignorance; and six small powders to be dissolved in water, and a tea-spoonful every fourth hour—"Sovereign against rage and sombre thoughts," wrote the Doctor.

By the evening of the next day Dr Morgan, accompanied by his pet patient with the chronic tic, whom he had talked into exile, was on the steamboat on his way to Ostend.

Leonard resumed his life at Mr Prickett's; but the change in him did not escape the bookseller. All his ingenuous simplicity had deserted him. He was very distant, and very taciturn; he seemed to have grown much older. I shall not attempt to analyse metaphysically this change. By the help of such words as Leonard may himself occasionally let fall, the reader will dive into the boy's heart, and see how there the change had worked, and is working still. The happy dreamy peasant-genius, gazing on Glory with inebriate, undazzled eyes, is no more. It is a man, suddenly cut off from the old household holy ties—conscious of great powers, and confronted on all sides by barriers of iron—alone with hard Reality, and scornful London; and if he catches a glimpse of the lost Helicon, he sees, where he saw the Muse, a pale melancholy spirit veiling its face in shame—the ghost of the mournful mother, whose child has no name, not even the humblest, among the family of men.

On the second evening after Dr Morgan's departure, as Leonard was just about to leave the shop, a customer stepped in with a book in his hand which he had snatched from the shop-boy, who was removing the volumes for the night from the booth without.

"Mr Prickett, Mr Prickett!" said the customer, "I am ashamed of you. You presume to put upon this work, in two volumes, the sum of eight shillings."

Mr Prickett stepped forth from the Cimmerian gloom of some recess, and cried, "What! Mr Burley, is that you? But for your voice, I should not have known you."

"Man is like a book, Mr Prickett; the commonalty only look to his binding. I am better bound, it is very true."

Leonard glanced towards the speaker, who now stood under the gas-lamp, and thought he recognised his face. He looked again. Yes; it was the perch-fisher whom he had met on the banks of the Brent, and who had warned him of the lost fish and the broken line.

Mr Burley, (continuing.)—"But the 'Art of thinking!'—you charge eight shillings for the 'Art of Thinking.'"

Mr Prickett.—"Cheap enough, Mr Burley. A very clean copy."

Mr Burley.—"Usurer! I sold it to you for three shillings. It is more than 150 per cent you propose to gain from my 'Art of Thinking.'"

Mr Prickett, (stuttering and taken aback.)—"*You* sold it to me! Ah, now I remember. But it was more than three shillings I gave. You forget—two glasses of brandy and water."

Mr Burley.—"Hospitality, sir, is not to be priced. If you sell your hospitality, you are not worthy to possess my 'Art of Thinking.' I resume it. There are three shillings, and a shilling more for interest. No: on second thoughts, instead of that shilling, I will return your hospitality; and the first time you come my way you shall have two glasses of brandy and water."

Mr Prickett did not look pleased, but he made no objection; and Mr Burley put the book into his pocket, and turned to examine the shelves. He bought an old jest-book, a stray volume of the Comedies of Destouches—paid for them—put them also into his pocket, and was sauntering out, when he perceived Leonard, who was now standing at the doorway.

"Hem! who is that?" he asked, whispering Mr Prickett.

"A young assistant of mine, and very clever."

Mr Burley scanned Leonard from top to toe.

"We have met before, sir. But you look as if you had returned to the Brent, and been fishing for my perch."

"Possibly, sir," answered Leonard. "But my line is tough, and is not yet broken, though the fish drags it amongst the weeds, and buries itself in the mud."

He lifted his hat, bowed slightly, and walked on.

"He *is* clever," said Mr Burley to the bookseller: "he understands allegory."

Mr Prickett.—"Poor youth! He came to town with the idea of turning author: you know what *that* is, Mr Burley."

Mr Burley, (with an air of superb dignity.)—"Bibliopole, yes! An author is a being between gods and men, who ought to be lodged in a palace, and entertained at the public charge upon Ortolans and Tokay. He should be kept lapped in down, and curtained with silken awnings from the cares of life—have nothing to do but to write books upon tables of cedar, and fish for perch from a gilded galley. And that's what will come to pass when the ages lose their barbarism, and know their benefactors. Meanwhile, sir, I invite you to my rooms, and will regale you upon brandy and water as long as I can pay for it; and when I cannot—you shall regale me."

Mr Prickett muttered, "A very bad bargain, indeed," as Mr Burley, with his chin in the air, stepped into the street.

CHAPTER XX.

At first, Leonard had always returned home through the crowded thoroughfares—the contact of numbers had animated his spirits. But the last two days, since his discovery of his birth, he had taken his way down the comparatively unpeopled path of the New Road.

He had just gained that part of this outskirt in which the statuaries and tomb-makers exhibit their gloomy wares—furniture alike for gardens and for graves—and, pausing, contemplated a column, on which was placed an urn half covered with a funeral mantle, when his shoulder was lightly tapped, and, turning quickly, he saw Mr Burley standing behind him.

"Excuse me, sir, but you understand perch-fishing; and since we find ourselves on the same road, I should like to be better acquainted with you. I hear you once wished to be an author. I am one."

Leonard had never before, to his knowledge, seen an author, and a mournful smile passed his lips as he surveyed the perch-fisher.

Mr Burley was indeed very differently attired since the first interview by the brooklet. He looked much less like an author—but more perhaps like a perch-fisher. He had a new white hat, stuck on one side of his head—a new green overcoat—new grey trousers, and new boots. In his hand was a whalebone stick, with a silver handle. Nothing could be more vagrant, devil-me-carish, and, to use a slang word, *tigrish*, than his whole air. Yet, vulgar as was his costume, he did not himself seem vulgar, but rather eccentric—lawless—something out of the pale of convention. His face looked more pale and more puffed than before, the tip of his nose redder; but the spark in his

eye was of livelier light, and there was self-enjoyment in the corners of his sensual humorous lip.

"You are an author, sir," repeated Leonard. "Well. And what is your report of the calling? Yonder column props an urn. The column is tall, and the urn is graceful. But it looks out of place by the roadside: what say you?"

MR BURLEY.—"It would look better in the churchyard."

LEONARD.—"So I was thinking. And you are an author!"

MR BURLEY.—"Ah, I said you had a quick sense of allegory. And so you think an author looks better in a churchyard, when you see him but as a muffled urn under the moonshine, than standing beneath the gas-lamp in a white hat, and with a red tip to his nose. Abstractedly, you are right. But, with your leave, the author would rather be where he is. Let us walk on." The two men felt an interest in each other, and they walked some yards in silence.

"To return to the urn," said Mr Burley—"you think of fame and churchyards. Natural enough, before illusion dies; but I think of the moment, of existence—and I laugh at fame. Fame, sir—not worth a glass of cold without! And as for a glass of warm, with sugar—and five shillings in one's pocket to spend as one pleases—what is there in Westminster Abbey to compare with it?"

"Talk on, sir—I should like to hear you talk. Let me listen and hold my tongue." Leonard pulled his hat over his brows, and gave up his moody, questioning, turbulent mind to his new acquaintance.

And John Burley talked on. A dangerous and a fascinating talk it was—the talk of a great intellect fallen. A serpent trailing its length on the ground, and showing bright, shifting, glorious hues, as it grovelled. A serpent, yet without the serpent's guile. If John Burley deceived and tempted, he meant it not—he crawled and glittered alike honestly. No dove could be more simple.

Laughing at fame, he yet dwelt with an eloquent enthusiasm on the joy of composition. "What do I care what men without are to say and think of the words that gush forth on my page?" cried he. "If you think of the public, of urns, and laurels, while you write, you are no genius; you are not fit to

be an author. I write because it rejoices me—because it is my nature. Written, I care no more what becomes of it than the lark for the effect that the song has on the peasant it wakes to the plough. The poet, like the lark, sings 'from his watch-tower in the skies.' Is this true?"

"Yes, very true!"

"What can rob us of this joy! The bookseller will not buy, the public will not read. Let them sleep at the foot of the ladder of the angels—we climb it all the same. And then one settles down into such good-tempered Lucianic contempt for men. One wants so little from them, when one knows what one's-self is worth, and what they are. They are just worth the coin one can extract from them, in order to live. Our life —*that* is worth so much to us. And then their joys, so vulgar to them, we can make them golden and kingly. Do you suppose Burns drinking at the ale-house, with his boors around him, was drinking, like them, only beer and whisky? No, he was drinking nectar—he was imbibing his own ambrosial thoughts—shaking with the laughter of the gods. The coarse human liquid was just needed to unlock his spirit from the clay—take it from jerkin and corduroys, and wrap it in the 'singing robes' that floated wide in the skies: the beer or the whisky needed but for that, and then it changed at once into the drink of Hebé. But come, you have not known this life—you have not seen it. Come, give me this night. I have moneys about me—I will fling them abroad as liberally as Alexander himself, when he left to his share but hope. Come!"

"Whither?"

"To my throne. On that throne last sate Edmund Kean—mighty mime. I am his successor. We will see whether in truth these wild sons of genius, who are cited but 'to point a moral and adorn a tale,' were objects of compassion. Sober-suited cits to lament over a Savage and a Morland—a Porson and a Burns!—"

"Or a Chatterton," said Leonard, gloomily.

"Chatterton was an impostor in all things; he feigned excesses that he never knew. *He* a bacchanalian—a royster! He!—No. We will talk of him. Come!"

Leonard went.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Room! And the smoke-reek, and the gas glare of it!—The whitewash of the walls, and the prints thereon of the actors in their mime-robes, and stage postures; actors as far back as their own lost Augustan era, when the stage was a real living influence on the manners and the age! There was Betterton in wig and gown—as Cato, moralising on the soul's eternity, and halting between Plato and the dagger. There was Woodward as "The Fine Gentleman," with the inimitable rake-hell air in which the heroes of Wycherly and Congreve and Farquhar live again. There was jovial Quin as Falstaff, with round buckler and "fair round belly." There was Colly Cibber in brocade—taking snuff as with "his Lord," the thumb and forefinger raised in air—and looking at you for applause. There was Macklin as Shylock, with knife in hand; and Kemble, in the solemn weeds of the Dane; and Kean in the place of honour over the chimneypiece.

When we are suddenly taken from practical life, with its real workday men, and presented to the portraits of those sole heroes of a World Phantastic and Phantasmal, in the garments wherein they did "strut and fret their hour upon the stage," verily there is something in the sight that moves an inner sense within ourselves—for all of us have an inner sense of some existence, apart from the one that wears away our days: an existence that, afar from St James's and St Giles's, the Law Courts and Exchange, goes its way in terror or mirth, in smiles or in tears, through a vague magic land of the poets. There, see those actors—they are the men who lived it—to

whom our world was the false one, to whom the Imaginary was the Actual! And did Shakspeare himself, in his life, ever hearken to the applause that thundered round the Personators of his airy images? Vague children of the most transient of the arts, fleet shadows on running waters, though thrown down from the steadfast stars, were ye not happier than we who live in the Real? How strange you must feel in the great circuit that ye now take through eternity! No prompt-books, no lamps, no acting Congreve and Shakspeare there! For what parts in the skies have your studies on the earth fitted you? Your ultimate destinies are very puzzling. Hail to your effigies, and pass we on!

There, too, on the whitewashed walls, were admitted the portraits of ruder rivals in the arena of fame—yet they, too, had known an applause warmer than his age gave to Shakspeare; the Champions of the Ring—Cribb, and Molyneux, and Dutch Sam. Interspersed with these was an old print of Newmarket in the early part of the last century, and sundry engravings from Hogarth. But poets, oh! they were there too: poets who might be supposed to have been sufficiently good fellows to be at home with such companions. Shakspeare, of course, with his placid forehead; Ben Jonson, with his heavy scowl; Burns and Byron cheek by jowl. But the strangest of all these heterogeneous specimens of graphic art was a full-length print of William Pitt!—William Pitt, the austere and imperious. What the deuce did he do there amongst prize-fighters, and actors, and poets? It seemed an insult to his grand memory. Nevertheless there he was, very erect, and with a look of ineffable disgust in his upturned nostrils. The portraits on the sordid walls were very like the crambo in the minds of ordinary men—very like the motley pictures of the FAMOUS hung up in your parlour, O my Public! Actors and prize-fighters, poets and statesmen, all without congruity and fitness, all whom you have been to see or to hear for a moment, and whose names have stared out in your newspapers, O my Public!

And the company? Indescribable! Comedians, from small theatres, out of employ; pale haggard-looking boys, probably the sons of worthy traders, trying their best to break their

fathers' hearts; here and there the marked features of a Jew. Now and then you might see the curious puzzled face of some greenhorn about town, or perhaps a Cantab; and men of grave age, and greyhaired, were there, and amongst them a wondrous proportion of carbuncled faces and bottle noses. And when John Burley entered, there was a shout that made William Pitt shake in his frame. Such stamping and hallooing, and such hurrahs for "Burly John." And the gentleman who had filled the great high leathern chair in his absence gave it up to John Burley; and Leonard, with his grave observant eye, and lip half sad and half scornful, placed himself by the side of his introducer. There was a nameless expectant stir through the assembly, as there is in the pit of the opera when some great singer advances to the lamps, and begins "*Di tanti palpiti.*" Time flies. Look at the Dutch clock over the door. Half-an-hour! John Burley begins to warm. A yet quicker light begins to break from his eye; his voice has a mellow luscious roll in it.

"He will be grand to-night," whispered a thin man, who looked like a tailor, seated on the other side of Leonard.

Time flies—an hour! Look again at the Dutch clock. John Burley *is* grand, he is in his zenith, at his culminating point. What magnificent drollery!—what luxuriant humour! How the Rabelais shakes in his easy chair! Under the rush and the roar of this fun, (what word else shall describe it?) the man's intellect is as clear as a gold sand under a river. Such wit and such truth, and, at times, such a flood of quick eloquence. All now are listeners—silent, save in applause. And Leonard listened too. Not, as he would some nights ago, in innocent unquestioning delight. No; his mind has passed through great sorrow, great passion, and it comes out unsettled, inquiring, eager, brooding over joy itself as over a problem. And the drink circulates, and faces change; and there are gabbling and babbling; and Burley's head sinks in his bosom, and he is silent. And up starts a wild, dissolute bacchanalian glee for seven voices. And the smoke-reek grows denser and thicker, and the gas-light looks dizzy through the haze. And John Burley's eyes reel.

Look again at the Dutch clock. Two hours have gone. John Burley has broken out again from his silence, his voice thick and husky, and his laugh cracked; and he talks, O ye gods! such rubbish and ribaldry; and the listeners roar aloud, and think it finer than before. And Leonard, who had hitherto been measuring himself in his mind, against the giant, and saying inly, "He soars out of my reach," finds the giant shrink smaller and smaller, and saith to himself, "He is but of man's common standard, after all!"

Look again at the Dutch clock. Three hours have passed. Is John Burley now of man's common standard? Man himself seems to have vanished from the scene: his soul stolen from him, his form gone away with the fumes of the smoke, and the nauseous steam from that fiery bowl. And Leonard looked round, and saw but the swine of Circe—some on the floor, some staggering against the walls, some hugging each other on the tables, some fighting, some bawling, some weeping. The divine spark had fled from the human face; the Beast is everywhere growing more and more out of the thing that had been Man. And John Burley, still unconquered, but clean lost to his senses, fancies himself a preacher, and drawls forth the most lugubrious sermon upon the brevity of life that mortal ever heard, accompanied with unctuous sobs; and now and then, in the midst of balderdash, gleams out a gorgeous sentence, that Jeremy Taylor might have envied; drivelling away again into a cadence below the rhetoric of a Muggletonian. And the waiters choked up the doorway, listening and laughing, and prepared to call cabs and coaches; and suddenly some one turned off the gaslight, and all was dark as pitch—howls and laughter, as of the damned, ringing through the Pandemonium. Out from the black atmosphere stept the boy-poet; and the still stars rushed on his sight, as they looked over the grimy roof-tops.

CHAPTER XXII.

Well, Leonard, this is the first time thou hast shown that thou hast in thee the iron out of which true manhood is forged and shaped. Thou hast *the power to resist.* Forth, unebriate, unpolluted, he came from the orgy, as yon star above him came from the cloud.

He had a latch-key to his lodgings. He let himself in, and walked noiselessly up the creaking wooden stair. It was dawn. He passed on to his window, and threw it open. The green elm-tree from the carpenter's yard looked as fresh and fair as if rooted in solitudes, leagues away from the smoke of Babylon.

"Nature, Nature!" murmured Leonard, "I hear thy voice now. This stills—this strengthens. But the struggle is very dread. Here, despair of life—there, faith in life. Nature thinks of neither, and lives serenely on."

By and by, a bird slid softly from the heart of the tree, and dropped on the ground below out of sight. But Leonard heard its carol. It awoke its companions—wings began to glance in the air, and the clouds grew red towards the east.

Leonard sighed and left the window. On the table, near Helen's rose-tree, which he bent over wistfully, lay a letter. He had not observed it before. It was in Helen's hand. He took it to the light, and read it by the pure healthful gleams of morn:—

"Oh my dear brother Leonard, will this find you well, and (more happy I dare not say, but) less sad than when we parted? I write kneeling, so that it seems to me as if I wrote and prayed at the same time. You may come and see me to-morrow

evening, Leonard. Do come, do—we shall walk together in this pretty garden; and there is an arbour all covered with jessamine and honeysuckle, from which we can look down on London. I have looked from it so many times—so many—trying if I can guess the roofs in our poor little street, and fancying that I do see the dear elm-tree.

"Miss Starke is very kind to me; and I think, after I have seen you, that I shall be happy here—that is, if you are happy.

"Your own grateful sister,

"HELEN.

"Ivy Lodge."

"P.S.—Any one will direct you to our house; it lies to the left, near the top of the hill, a little way down a lane that is overhung on one side with chestnut trees and lilies. I shall be watching for you at the gate."

Leonard's brow softened, he looked again like his former self. Up from the dark sea at his heart smiled the meek face of a child, and the waves lay still as at the charm of a spirit.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"And what is Mr Burley, and what has he written?" asked Leonard of Mr Prickett when he returned to the shop.

Let us reply to that question in our own words, for we know more about Mr Burley than Mr Prickett does.

John Burley was the only son of a poor clergyman, in a village near Ealing, who had scraped, and saved, and pinched, to send his son to an excellent provincial school in a northern county, and thence to college. At the latter, during his first year, young Burley was remarked by the undergraduates for his thick shoes and coarse linen, and remarkable to the authorities for his assiduity and learning. The highest hopes were entertained of him by the tutors and examiners. At the beginning of the second year his high animal spirits, before kept down by study, broke out. Reading had become easy to him. He knocked off his tasks with a facile stroke, as it were. He gave up his leisure hours to symposia by no means Socratical. He fell into an idle hard-drinking set. He got into all kinds of scrapes. The authorities were at first kind and forbearing in their admonitions, for they respected his abilities, and still hoped he might become an honour to the university. But at last he went drunk into a formal examination, and sent in papers, after the manner of Aristophanes, containing capital jokes upon the Dons and Big-wigs themselves. The offence was the greater, and seemed the more premeditated, for being clothed in Greek. John Burley was expelled. He went home to his father's a miserable man, for, with all his follies, he had a good heart. Removed from ill example, his life for a year was blameless. He got admitted as usher into the school in

which he had received instruction as a pupil. This school was in a large town. John Burley became member of a club formed among the tradesmen, and spent three evenings a-week there. His astonishing convivial and conversational powers began to declare themselves. He grew the oracle of the club; and, from being the most sober peaceful assembly in which grave fathers of a family ever smoked a pipe or sipped a glass, it grew under Mr Burley's auspices the parent of revels as frolicking and frantic as those out of which the old Greek Goat Song ever tipsily rose. This would not do. There was a great riot in the streets one night, and the next morning the usher was dismissed. Fortunately for John Burley's conscience, his father had died before this happened—died believing in the reform of his son. During his ushership, Mr Burley had scraped acquaintance with the editor of the county newspaper, and given him some capital political articles; for Burley was, like Parr and Porson, a notable politician. The editor furnished him with letters to the journalists in London, and John came to the metropolis and got employed on a very respectable newspaper. At college he had known Audley Egerton, though but slightly: that gentleman was then just rising into repute in Parliament. Burley sympathised with some question on which Audley had distinguished himself, and wrote a very good article thereon—an article so good that Egerton inquired into the authorship, found out Burley, and resolved in his own mind to provide for him whenever he himself came into office. But Burley was a man whom it was impossible to provide for. He soon lost his connection with the newspaper. First, he was so irregular that he could never be depended upon. Secondly, he had strange honest eccentric twists of thinking, that could coalesce with the thoughts of no party in the long run. An article of his, inadvertently admitted, had horrified all the proprietors, staff, and readers of the paper. It was diametrically opposite to the principles the paper advocated, and compared its pet politician to Catiline. Then John Burley shut himself up and wrote books. He wrote two or three books, very clever, but not at all to the popular taste—abstract and learned, full of whims that were *caviare* to the multitude, and larded

with Greek. Nevertheless they obtained for him a little money, and among literary men some reputation. Now Audley Egerton came into power, and got him, though with great difficulty—for there were many prejudices against this scampish harum-scarum son of the Muses—a place in a public office. He kept it about a month, and then voluntarily resigned it. "My crust of bread and liberty!" quoth John Burley, and he vanished into a garret. From that time to the present he lived—Heaven knows how. Literature is a business, like everything else; John Burley grew more and more incapable of business. "He could not do taskwork," he said; he wrote when the whim seized him, or when the last penny was in his pouch, or when he was actually in the spunging-house or the Fleet—migrations which occurred to him, on an average, twice a-year. He could generally sell what he had positively written, but no one would engage him beforehand. Magazines and other periodicals were very glad to have his articles, on the condition that they were anonymous; and his style was not necessarily detected, for he could vary it with the facility of a practised pen. Audley Egerton continued his best supporter, for there were certain questions on which no one wrote with such force as John Burley—questions connected with the metaphysics of politics, such as law reform and economical science. And Audley Egerton was the only man John Burley put himself out of the way to serve, and for whom he would give up a drinking bout and do *taskwork;* for John Burley was grateful by nature, and he felt that Egerton had really tried to befriend him. Indeed, it was true, as he had stated to Leonard by the Brent, that, even after he had resigned his desk in the London office, he had had the offer of an appointment in Jamaica, and a place in India, from the Minister. But probably there were other charms then than those exercised by the one-eyed perch that kept him to the neighbourhood of London. With all his grave faults of character and conduct, John Burley was not without the fine qualities of a large nature. He was most resolutely his own enemy, it is true, but he could hardly be said to be any one else's. Even when he criticised some more fortunate writer, he was good-humoured in his very satire: he had no

bile, no envy. And as for freedom from malignant personalities, he might have been a model to all critics. I must except politics, however, for in these he could be rabid and savage. He had a passion for independence, which, though pushed to excess, was not without grandeur. No lick-platter, no parasite, no toadeater, no literary beggar, no hunter after patronage and subscriptions; even in his dealings with Audley Egerton, he insisted on naming the price for his labours. He took a price, because, as the papers required by Audley demanded much reading and detail, which was not at all to his taste, he considered himself entitled fairly to something more than the editor of the journal, wherein the papers appeared, was in the habit of giving. But he assessed this extra price himself, and as he would have done to a bookseller. And when in debt and in prison, though he knew a line to Egerton would have extricated him, he never wrote that line. He would depend alone on his pen—dipped it hastily in the ink, and scrawled himself free. The most debased point about him was certainly the incorrigible vice of drinking, and with it the usual concomitant of that vice—the love of low company. To be King of the Bohemians—to dazzle by his wild humour, and sometimes to exalt by his fanciful eloquence, the rude gross natures that gathered round him—this was a royalty that repaid him for all sacrifice of solid dignity; a foolscap crown that he would not have changed for an emperor's diadem. Indeed, to appreciate rightly the talents of John Burley, it was necessary to hear him talk on such occasions. As a writer, after all, he was only now capable of unequal desultory efforts. But as a talker, in his own wild way, he was original and matchless. And the gift of talk is one of the most dangerous gifts a man can possess for his own sake—the applause is so immediate, and gained with so little labour. Lower, and lower, and lower had sunk John Burley, not only in the opinion of all who knew his name, but in the habitual exercise of his talents. And this seemed wilfully—from choice. He would write for some unstamped journal of the populace, out of the pale of the law, for pence, when he could have got pounds from journals of high repute. He was very fond of scribbling off penny ballads,

and then standing in the street to hear them sung. He actually once made himself the poet of an advertising tailor, and enjoyed it excessively. But that did not last long, for John Burley was a Pittite—not a Tory, he used to say, but a Pittite. And if you had heard him talk of Pitt, you would never have known what to make of that great statesman. He treated him as the German commentators do Shakspeare, and invested him with all imaginary meanings and objects, that would have turned the grand practical man into a sybil. Well, he was a Pittite; the tailor a fanatic for Thelwall and Cobbett. Mr Burley wrote a poem, wherein Britannia appeared to the tailor, complimented him highly on the art he exhibited in adorning the persons of her sons; and, bestowing upon him a gigantic mantle, said that he, and he alone, might be enabled to fit it to the shoulders of living men. The rest of the poem was occupied in Mr Snip's unavailing attempts to adjust this mantle to the eminent politicians of the day, when, just as he had sunk down in despair, Britannia reappeared to him, and consoled him with the information that he had done all mortal man could do, and that she had only desired to convince pigmies that no human art could adjust to *their* proportions the mantle of William Pitt. *Sic itur ad astra*—she went back to the stars, mantle and all! Mr Snip was exceedingly indignant at this allegorical effusion, and with wrathful shears cut the tie between himself and his poet.

Thus, then, the reader has, we trust, a pretty good idea of John Burley—a specimen of his genus, not very common in any age, and now happily almost extinct, since authors of all degrees share in the general improvement in order, economy, and sober decorum, which has obtained in the national manners. Mr Prickett, though entering into less historical detail than we have done, conveyed to Leonard a tolerably accurate notion of the man, representing him as a person of great powers and learning, who had thoroughly thrown himself away.

Leonard did not, however, see how much Mr Burley himself was to be blamed for his waste of life; he could not conceive a man of genius voluntarily seating himself at the lowest step in the social ladder. He rather supposed he had been thrust down there by Necessity.

And when Mr Prickett, concluding, said, "Well, I should think Burley would cure you of the desire to be an author even more than Chatterton," the young man answered gloomily, "Perhaps," and turned to the book-shelves.

With Mr Prickett's consent, Leonard was released earlier than usual from his task, and a little before sunset he took his way to Highgate. He was fortunately directed to take the new road by the Regent's Park, and so on through a very green and smiling country. The walk, the freshness of the air, the songs of the birds, and, above all, when he had got half-way, the solitude of the road, served to rouse him from his stern and sombre meditations. And when he came into the lane overhung with chestnut trees, and suddenly caught sight of Helen's watchful and then brightening face, as she stood by the wicket, and under the shadow of cool murmurous boughs, the blood rushed gaily through his veins, and his heart beat loud and gratefully.

CHAPTER XXIV.

She drew him into the garden with such true childlike joy!

Now behold them seated in the arbour—a perfect bower of sweets and blossoms; the wilderness of roof-tops and spires stretching below, broad and far; London seen dim and silent, as in a dream.

She took his hat from his brows gently, and looked him in the face with tearful penetrating eyes.

She did not say, "You are changed." She said, "Why, why did I leave you?" and then turned away.

"Never mind me, Helen. I am man, and rudely born—speak of yourself. This lady is kind to you, then?"

"Does she not let me see you? Oh! very kind—and look here."

Helen pointed to fruits and cakes set out on the table. "A feast, brother."

And she began to press her hospitality with pretty winning ways, more playful than was usual to her, and talking very fast, and with forced but silvery laughter.

By degrees she stole him from his gloom and reserve; and, though he could not reveal to her the cause of his bitterest sorrow, he owned that he had suffered much. He would not have owned *that* to another living being. And then, quickly turning from this brief confession, with assurances that the worst was over, he sought to amuse her by speaking of his new acquaintance with the perch-fisher. But when he spoke of this man with a kind of reluctant admiration, mixed with compassionate yet gloomy interest, and drew a grotesque though subdued

sketch of the wild scene in which he had been spectator, Helen grew alarmed and grave.

"Oh, brother, do not go there again—do not see more of this bad man."

"Bad!—no! Hopeless and unhappy, he has stooped to stimulants and oblivion;—but you cannot understand these things, my pretty preacher."

"Yes I do, Leonard. What is the difference between being good and bad? The good do not yield to temptations, and the bad do."

The definition was so simple and so wise that Leonard was more struck with it than he might have been by the most elaborate sermon by Parson Dale.

"I have often murmured to myself since I lost you, 'Helen was my good angel;'—say on. For my heart is dark to myself, and while you speak light seems to dawn on it."

This praise so confused Helen that she was long before she could obey the command annexed to it. But, by little and little, words came to both more frankly. And then he told her the sad tale of Chatterton, and waited, anxious to hear her comments.

"Well," he said, seeing that she remained silent, "how can *I* hope, when this mighty genius laboured and despaired? What did he want, save birth and fortune, and friends, and human justice."

"Did he pray to God?" asked Helen, drying her tears.

Again Leonard was startled. In reading the life of Chatterton, he had not much noted the scepticism, assumed or real, of the ill-fated aspirer to earthly immortality. At Helen's question, that scepticism struck him forcibly.

"Why do you ask that, Helen?"

"Because, when we pray often, we grow so very, very patient," answered the child. "Perhaps, had he been patient a few months more, all would have been won by him, as it will be by you, brother; for you pray, and you will be patient."

Leonard bowed his head in deep thought, and this time the thought was not gloomy. Then out from that awful life there glowed another passage, which before he had not heeded duly,

but regarded rather as one of the darkest mysteries in the fate of Chatterton.

At the very time the despairing poet had locked himself up in his garret, to dismiss his soul from its earthly ordeal, his genius had just found its way into the light of renown. Good and learned and powerful men were preparing to serve and save him. Another year—nay, perchance another month—and he might have stood acknowledged and sublime in the foremost front of his age.

"Oh Helen!" cried Leonard, raising his brows from which the cloud had passed, "why, indeed, did you leave me?"

Helen started in her turn as he repeated this regret, and in her turn grew thoughtful. At length she asked him if he had written for the box which had belonged to her father, and been left at the inn.

And Leonard, though a little chafed at what he thought a childish interruption to themes of graver interest, owned with self-reproach that he had forgotten to do so. Should he not write now to order the box to be sent to her at Miss Starke's.

"No; let it be sent to you. Take care of it. I should like to know that something of mine is with you; and perhaps I may not stay here long."

"Not stay here? That you must, my dear Helen—at least as long as Miss Starke will keep you, and is kind. By and by (added Leonard, with something of his former sanguine tone) I may yet make my way, and we shall have our cottage to ourselves. But—Oh Helen!—I forgot—you wounded me; you left your money with me. I only found it in my drawers the other day. Fie!—I have brought it back."

"It was not mine—it is yours. We were to share together—you paid all; and how can I want it here, too?"

But Leonard was obstinate; and as Helen mournfully received back all that of fortune her father had bequeathed to her, a tall female figure stood at the entrance of the arbour, and said, in a voice that scattered all sentiment to the winds—"Young man, it is time to go."

CHAPTER XXV.

"ALREADY!" said Helen, with faltering accents, as she crept to Miss Starke's side while Leonard rose and bowed. "I am very grateful to you, madam," said he, with the grace that comes from all refinement of idea, "for allowing me to see Miss Helen. Do not let me abuse your kindness." Miss Starke seemed struck with his look and manner, and made a stiff half curtsey.

A form more rigid than Miss Starke's it was hard to conceive. She was like the Grim White Woman in the nursery ballads. Yet, apparently, there was a good nature in allowing the stranger to enter her trim garden, and providing for him and her little charge those fruits and cakes, which belied her aspect. "May I go with him to the gate?" whispered Helen, as Leonard had already passed up the path.

"You may, child; but do not loiter. And then come back, and lock up the cakes and cherries, or Patty will get at them."

Helen ran after Leonard.

"Write to me, brother—write to me; and do not, do not be friends with this man, who took you to that wicked, wicked place."

"Oh, Helen, I go from you strong enough to brave worse dangers than that," said Leonard almost gaily.

They kissed each other at the little wicket gate, and parted.

Leonard walked home under the summer moonlight, and on entering his chamber, looked first at his rose-tree. The leaves of yesterday's flowers lay strewn round it; but the tree had put forth new buds.

"Nature ever restores," said the young man. He paused a moment, and added, "Is it that Nature is very patient?"

His sleep that night was not broken by the fearful dreams he had lately known. He rose refreshed, and went his way to his day's work—not stealing along the less crowded paths, but, with a firm step, through the throng of men. Be bold, adventurer—thou hast more to suffer! Wilt thou sink? I look into thy heart, and I cannot answer.

BOOK SEVENTH

BOOK SEVENTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

MR CAXTON UPON COURAGE AND PATIENCE.

"WHAT is courage?" said my uncle Roland, rousing himself from a reverie into which he had fallen after the Sixth Book in this history had been read to our family circle.

"What is courage?" he repeated more earnestly. "Is it insensibility to fear? *That* may be the mere accident of constitution; and, if so, there is no more merit in being courageous than in being this table."

"I am very glad to hear you speak thus," observed Mr Caxton, "for I should not like to consider myself a coward; yet I am very sensible to fear in all dangers, bodily and moral."

"La, Austin, how can you say so?" cried my mother, firing up; "was it not only last week that you faced the great bull that was rushing after Blanche and the children?"

Blanche at that recollection stole to my father's chair, and, hanging over his shoulder, kissed his forehead.

MR CAXTON, (sublimely unmoved by these flatteries.)—"I don't deny that I faced the bull, but I assert that I was horribly frightened."

ROLAND.—"The sense of honour which conquers fear is the

true courage of chivalry: you could not run away when others were looking on—no gentleman could."

MR CAXTON.—"Fiddledee! It was not on my gentility that I stood, Captain. I should have run fast enough, if it had done any good. I stood upon my understanding. As the bull could run faster than I could, the only chance of escape was to make the brute as frightened as myself."

BLANCHE.—"Ah, you did not think of that; your only thought was to save me and the children."

MR CAXTON.—"Possibly, my dear—very possibly I might have been afraid for you too;—but I was very much afraid for myself. However, luckily I had the umbrella, and I sprang it up and spread it forth in the animal's stupid eyes, hurling at him simultaneously the biggest lines I could think of in the First Chorus of the 'Seven against Thebes.' I began with ELEDEMNAS PEDIOPLOKTUPOS; and when I came to the grand howl of Ἰὼ, ἰὼ, ἰὼ, ἰὼ—the beast stood appalled as at the roar of a lion. I shall never forget his amazed snort at the Greek. Then he kicked up his hind legs, and went bolt through the gap in the hedge. Thus, armed with Æschylus and the umbrella, I remained master of the field; but, (continued Mr Caxton, ingenuously,) I should not like to go through that half minute again."

"No man would," said the Captain kindly. "I should be very sorry to face a bull myself, even with a bigger umbrella than yours, and even though I had Æschylus, and Homer to boot, at my fingers' ends."

MR CAXTON.—"You would not have minded if it had been a Frenchman with a sword in his hand?

CAPTAIN.—"Of course not. Rather liked it than otherwise," he added grimly.

MR CAXTON.—"Yet many a Spanish matador, who doesn't care a button for a bull, would take to his heels at the first lunge *en carte* from a Frenchman. Therefore, in fact, if courage be a matter of constitution, it is also a matter of custom. We face calmly the dangers we are habituated to, and recoil from those of which we have no familiar experience. I doubt if Marshal Turenne himself would have been quite at his ease on

the tight-rope; and a rope-dancer, who seems disposed to scale the heavens with Titanic temerity, might possibly object to charge on a cannon."

CAPTAIN ROLAND.—"Still, either this is not the courage I mean, or it is another kind of it. I mean by courage that which is the especial force and dignity of the human character, without which there is no reliance on principle, no constancy in virtue—a something," continued my uncle gallantly, and with a half bow towards my mother, "which your sex shares with our own. When the lover, for instance, clasps the hand of his betrothed, and says, 'Wilt thou be true to me, in spite of absence and time, in spite of hazard and fortune, though my foes malign me, though thy friends may dissuade thee, and our lot in life may be rough and rude?' and when the betrothed answers, 'I will be true,' does not the lover trust to her courage as well as her love?"

"Admirably put, Roland," said my father. "But *apropos* of what do you puzzle us with these queries on courage?"

CAPTAIN ROLAND, (with a slight blush.)—"I was led to the inquiry (though, perhaps, it may be frivolous to take so much thought of what, no doubt, costs Pisistratus so little) by the last chapters in my nephew's story. I see this poor boy, Leonard, alone with his fallen hopes, (though very irrational they were,) and his sense of shame. And I read his heart, I dare say, better than Pisistratus does, for I could feel like that boy if I had been in the same position; and, conjecturing what he and thousands like him must go through, I asked myself, 'What can save him and them?' I answered, as a soldier would answer, 'Courage!' Very well. But pray, Austin, what is courage?"

MR CAXTON, (prudently backing out of a reply.)—"*Papæ!* Brother, since you have just complimented the ladies on that quality, you had better address your question to them."

Blanche here leant both hands on my father's chair, and said, looking down at first bashfully, but afterwards warming with the subject, "Do you not think, sir, that little Helen has already suggested, if not what is courage, what at least is the real essence of all courage that endures and conquers, that ennobles, and hallows, and redeems? Is it not PATIENCE, father?—and that

is why we women have a courage of our own. Patience does not affect to be superior to fear, but at least it never admits despair.

PISISTRATUS.—"Kiss me, my Blanche, for you have come near to the truth which perplexed the soldier and puzzled the sage."

MR CAXTON, (tartly.)—"If you mean me by the sage, I was not puzzled at all. Heaven knows you do right to inculcate patience—it is a virtue very much required in your readers. "Nevertheless," added my father, softening with the enjoyment of his joke—"nevertheless Blanche and Helen are quite right. Patience is the courage of the conqueror; it is the virtue, *par excellence*, of Man against Destiny—of the One against the World, and of the Soul against Matter. Therefore this is the courage of the Gospel; and its importance, in a social view—its importance to races and institutions—cannot be too earnestly inculcated. What is it that distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon from all other branches of the human family, peoples deserts with his children, and consigns to them the heritage of rising worlds? What but his faculty to brave, to suffer, to endure—the patience that resists firmly, and innovates slowly. Compare him with the Frenchman. The Frenchman has plenty of valour—that there is no denying; but as for fortitude, he has not enough to cover the point of a pin. He is ready to rush out of the world if he is bitten by a flea."

CAPTAIN ROLAND.—"There was a case in the papers the other day, Austin, of a Frenchman who actually did destroy himself because he was so teased by the little creatures you speak of. He left a paper on his table, saying that 'life was not worth having at the price of such torments.'" *

MR CAXTON, (solemnly.)—"Sir, their whole political history, since the great meeting of the Tiers Etat, has been the history of

* Fact. In a work by M. GIBERT, a celebrated French physician, on diseases of the skin, he states that that minute troublesome kind of rash, known by the name of *prurigo*, though not dangerous in itself, has often driven the individual afflicted by it to—suicide. I believe that our more varying climate, and our more heating drinks and aliments, render this skin complaint more common in England than in France, yet I doubt if any English physician could state that it had ever driven one of his *English* patients to suicide.

men who would rather go to the devil than be bitten by a flea. It is the record of human impatience, that seeks to force time, and expects to grow forests from the spawn of a mushroom. Wherefore, running through all extremes of constitutional experiment, when they are nearest to democracy they are next door to a despot; and all they have really done is to destroy whatever constitutes the foundation of every tolerable government. A constitutional monarchy cannot exist without aristocracy, nor a healthful republic endure with corruption of manners. The cry of Equality is incompatible with Civilisation, which, of necessity, contrasts poverty with wealth—and, in short, whether it be an emperor or a mob* that is to rule, Force is the sole hope of order, and the government is but an army.

"Impress, O Pisistratus! impress the value of patience as regards man and men. You touch there on the kernel of the social system—the secret that fortifies the individual and disciplines the million. I care not, for my part, if you are tedious so long as you are earnest. Be minute and detailed. Let the real Human Life, in its war with Circumstance, stand out. Never mind if one can read you but slowly—better chance of being less quickly forgotten. Patience, patience! By the soul of Epictetus, your readers shall set you an example!"

* Published more than a year before the date of the French empire under Louis Napoleon.

CHAPTER II.

Leonard had written twice to Mrs Fairfield, twice to Riccabocca, and once to Mr Dale ; and the poor proud boy could not bear to betray his humiliation. He wrote as with cheerful spirits—as if perfectly satisfied with his prospects. He said that he was well employed, in the midst of books, and that he had found kind friends. Then he turned from himself to write about those whom he addressed, and the affairs and interests of the quiet world wherein they lived. He did not give his own address, nor that of Mr Prickett. He dated his letters from a small coffee-house near the bookseller's, to which he occasionally went for his simple meals. He had a motive in this. He did not desire to be found out. Mr Dale replied for himself and for Mrs Fairfield, to the epistles addressed to these two. Riccabocca wrote also. Nothing could be more kind than the replies of both. They came to Leonard in a very dark period in his life, and they strengthened him in the noiseless battle with despair.

If there be a good in the world that we do without knowing it, without conjecturing the effect it may have upon a human soul, it is when we show kindness to the young in the first barren footpath up the mountain of life.

Leonard's face resumed its serenity in his intercourse with his employer ; but he did not recover his boyish ingenuous frankness. The under-currents flowed again pure from the turbid soil and the splintered fragments uptorn from the deep ; but they were still too strong and too rapid to allow transparency to the surface. And now he stood in the sublime world of books, still and earnest as a seer who invokes the dead. And thus, face to face with knowledge, hourly he discovered how

little he knew. Mr Prickett lent him such works as he selected and asked to take home with him. He spent whole nights in reading; and no longer desultorily. He read no more poetry, no more Lives of Poets. He read what poets must read if they desire to be great—*Sapere principium et fons*—strict reasonings on the human mind; the relations between motive and conduct, thought and action; the grave and solemn truths of the past world; antiquities, history, philosophy. He was taken out of himself. He was carried along the ocean of the universe. In that ocean, O seeker, study the law of the tides; and seeing Chance nowhere—Thought presiding over all—Fate, that dread phantom, shall vanish from creation, and Providence alone be visible in heaven and on earth!

CHAPTER III.

THERE was to be a considerable book-sale at a country house one day's journey from London. Mr Prickett meant to have attended it on his own behalf, and that of several gentlemen who had given him commissions for purchase; but, on the morning fixed for his departure, he was seized with a severe return of his old foe the rheumatism. He requested Leonard to attend instead of himself. Leonard went, and was absent for the three days during which the sale lasted. He returned late in the evening, and went at once to Mr Prickett's house. The shop was closed; he knocked at the private entrance; a strange person opened the door to him, and, in reply to his question if Mr Prickett was at home, said with a long and funereal face—"Young man, Mr Prickett senior is gone to his long home, but Mr Richard Prickett will see you."

At this moment a very grave-looking man, with lank hair, looked forth from the side-door communicating between the shop and the passage, and then stepped forward—"Come in, sir; you are my late uncle's assistant, Mr Fairfield, I suppose?"

"Your late uncle! Heavens, sir, do I understand aright—can Mr Prickett be dead since I left London?"

"Died, sir, suddenly last night. It was an affection of the heart; the Doctor thinks the rheumatism attacked that organ. He had small time to provide for his departure, and his account-books seem in sad disorder: I am his nephew and executor."

Leonard had now followed the nephew into the shop. There, still burned the gas-lamp. The place seemed more dingy and cavernous than before. Death always makes its presence felt in the house it visits.

Leonard was greatly affected—and yet more, perhaps, by the utter want of feeling which the nephew exhibited. In fact, the deceased had not been on friendly terms with this person, his nearest relative and heir-at-law, who was also a bookseller.

"You were engaged but by the week I find, young man, on reference to my late uncle's papers. He gave you £1 a-week —a monstrous sum! I shall not require your services any further. I shall move these books to my own house. You will be good enough to send me a list of those you bought at the sale, and your account of travelling-expenses, &c. What may be due to you shall be sent to your address. Good evening."

Leonard went home, shocked and saddened at the sudden death of his kind employer. He did not think much of himself that night; but, when he rose the next day, he suddenly felt that the world of London lay before him, without a friend, without a calling, without an occupation for bread.

This time it was no fancied sorrow, no poetic dream disappointed. Before him, gaunt and palpable, stood Famine.

Escape!—yes. Back to the village; his mother's cottage; the exile's garden; the radishes and the fount. Why could he not escape? Ask why civilisation cannot escape its ills, and fly back to the wild and the wigwam?

Leonard could not have returned to the cottage, even if the Famine that faced had already seized him with her skeleton hand. London releases not so readily her fated stepsons.

CHAPTER IV.

One day three persons were standing before an old book-stall in a passage leading from Oxford Street into Tottenham Court Road. Two were gentlemen; the third, of the class and appearance of those who more habitually halt at old book-stalls.

"Look," said one of the gentlemen to the other, "I have discovered here what I have searched for in vain the last ten years —the Horace of 1580, the Horace of the Forty Commentators—a perfect treasury of learning, and marked only fourteen shillings!"

"Hush, Norreys," said the other, "and observe what is yet more worth your study;" and he pointed to the third bystander, whose face, sharp and attenuated, was bent with an absorbed, and, as it were, with a hungering attention over an old worm-eaten volume.

"What is the book, my lord?" whispered Mr Norreys.

His companion smiled, and replied by another question, "What is the man who reads the book?"

Mr Norreys moved a few paces, and looked over the student's shoulder. "Preston's translation of Boethius, *The Consolations of Philosophy*," he said, coming back to his friend.

"He looks as if he wanted all the consolations Philosophy can give him, poor boy."

At this moment a fourth passenger paused at the book-stall, and, recognising the pale student, placed his hand on his shoulder and said, "Aha, young sir, we meet again. So poor Prickett is dead. But you are still haunted by associations. Books—books—magnets to which all iron minds move insensibly. What

is this? BOETHIUS! Ah, a book written in prison, but a little time before the advent of the only philosopher who solves to the simplest understanding every mystery of life—"

"And that philosopher?"

"Is Death!" said Mr Burley. "How can you be dull enough to ask? Poor Boethius, rich, nobly born, a consul, his sons consuls—the world one smile to the Last Philosopher of Rome. Then suddenly, against this type of the old world's departing WISDOM, stands frowning the new world's grim genius, FORCE—Theodoric the Ostrogoth condemning Boethius the Schoolman; and Boethius, in his Pavian dungeon, holding a dialogue with the shade of Athenian Philosophy. It is the finest picture upon which lingers the glimmering of the Western golden day, before night rushes over time."

"And," said Mr Norreys abruptly, "Boethius comes back to us with the faint gleam of returning light, translated by Alfred the Great. And, again, as the sun of knowledge bursts forth in all its splendour, by Queen Elizabeth. Boethius influences us as we stand in this passage; and that is the best of all the Consolations of Philosophy—eh, Mr Burley?"

Mr Burley turned and bowed.

The two men looked at each other; you could not see a greater contrast. Mr Burley, his gay green dress already shabby and soiled, with a rent in the skirts, and his face speaking of habitual night-cups. Mr Norreys, neat and somewhat precise in dress, with firm lean figure, and quiet, collected, vigorous energy in his eye and aspect.

"If," replied Mr Burley, "a poor devil like me may argue with a gentleman who may command his own price with the booksellers, I should say it is no consolation at all, Mr Norreys. And I should like to see any man of sense accept the condition of Boethius in his prison, with some strangler or headsman waiting behind the door, upon the promised proviso that he should be translated, centuries afterwards, by Kings and Queens, and help indirectly to influence the minds of Northern barbarians, babbling about him in an alley, jostled by passers-by who never heard the name of Boethius, and who don't care

a fig for philosophy. Your servant, sir—young man, come and talk."

Burley hooked his arm within Leonard's, and led the boy passively away.

"That is a clever man," said Harley L'Estrange. "But I am sorry to see yon young student, with his bright earnest eyes, and his lip that has the quiver of passion and enthusiasm, leaning on the arm of a guide who seems disenchanted of all that gives purpose to learning, and links philosophy with use to the world. Who, and what is this clever man whom you call Burley?"

"A man who might have been famous, if he had condescended to be respectable! The boy listening to us both so attentively interested *me* too—I should like to have the making of him. But I must buy this Horace."

The shopman, lurking within his hole like a spider for flies, was now called out. And when Mr Norreys had bought the Horace, and given an address where to send it, Harley asked the shopman if he knew the young man who had been reading Boethius.

"Only by sight. He has come here every day the last week, and spends hours at the stall. When once he fastens on a book, he reads it through."

"And never buys?" said Mr Norreys.

"Sir," said the shopman with a good-natured smile, "they who buy seldom read. The poor boy pays me twopence a-day to read as long as he pleases. I would not take it, but he is proud."

"I have known men amass great learning in that way," said Mr Norreys. "Yes, I should like to have that boy in my hands. And now, my lord, I am at your service, and we will go to the studio of your artist."

The two gentlemen walked on towards one of the streets out of Fitzroy Square.

In a few minutes more Harley L'Estrange was in his element, seated carelessly on a deal table, smoking his cigar, and discussing art with the gusto of a man who honestly loved, and the

taste of a man who thoroughly understood it. The young artist, in his dressing-robe, adding slow touch upon touch, paused often to listen the better. And Henry Norreys, enjoying the brief respite from a life of great labour, was gladly reminded of idle hours under rosy skies; for these three men had formed their friendship in Italy, where the bands of friendship are woven by the hands of the Graces.

CHAPTER V.

LEONARD and Mr Burley walked on into the suburbs round the north road from London, and Mr Burley offered to find literary employment for Leonard—an offer eagerly accepted.

Then they went into a public-house by the wayside. Burley demanded a private room, called for pen, ink, and paper; and, placing these implements before Leonard, said, "Write what you please in prose, five sheets of letter-paper, twenty-two lines to a page—neither more nor less."

"I cannot write so."

"Tut, 'tis for bread."

The boy's face crimsoned.

"I must forget that," said he.

"There is an arbour in the garden under a weeping ash," returned Burley. "Go there, and fancy yourself in Arcadia."

Leonard was too pleased to obey. He found out the little arbour at one end of a deserted bowling-green. All was still—the hedgerow shut out the sight of the inn. The sun lay warm on the grass, and glinted pleasantly through the leaves of the ash. And Leonard there wrote the first essay from his hand as Author by profession. What was it that he wrote? His dreamy impressions of London? an anathema on its streets, and its hearts of stone? murmurs against poverty? dark elegies on fate?

Oh, no! little knowest thou true genius, if thou askest such questions, or thinkest that there, under the weeping ash, the taskwork for bread was remembered; or that the sunbeam glinted but over the practical world, which, vulgar and sordid, lay around. Leonard wrote a fairy tale—one of the loveliest you can conceive, with a delicate touch of playful humour—in

a style all flowered over with happy fancies. He smiled as he wrote the last word—he was happy. In rather more than an hour Mr Burley came to him, and found him with that smile on his lips.

Mr Burley had a glass of brandy and water in his hand; it was his third. He too smiled—he too looked happy. He read the paper aloud, and well. He was very complimentary. "You will do!" said he, clapping Leonard on the back. "Perhaps some day you will catch my one-eyed perch." Then he folded up the MS., scribbled off a note, put the whole in one envelop —and they returned to London.

Mr Burley disappeared within a dingy office near Fleet Street, on which was inscribed—"Office of the *Beehive*," and soon came forth with a golden sovereign in his hand—Leonard's first-fruits. Leonard thought Peru lay before him. He accompanied Mr Burley to that gentleman's lodging in Maida Hill. The walk had been very long; Leonard was not fatigued. He listened with a livelier attention than before to Burley's talk. And when they reached the apartments of the latter, and Mr Burley sent to the cookshop, and their joint supper was taken out of the golden sovereign, Leonard felt proud, and for the first time for weeks he laughed the heart's laugh. The two writers grew more and more intimate and cordial. And there was a vast deal in Burley by which any young man might be made the wiser. There was no apparent evidence of poverty in the apartments—clean, new, well furnished; but all things in the most horrible litter—all speaking of the huge literary sloven.

For several days Leonard almost lived in those rooms. He wrote continuously—save when Burley's conversation fascinated him into idleness. Nay, it was not idleness—his knowledge grew larger as he listened; but the cynicism of the talker began slowly to work its way. That cynicism in which there was no faith, no hope, no vivifying breath from Glory—from Religion. The cynicism of the Epicurean, more degraded in his sty than ever was Diogenes in his tub; and yet presented with such ease and such eloquence—with such art and such mirth —so adorned with illustration and anecdote, so unconscious of debasement!

Strange and dread philosophy — that made it a maxim to squander the gifts of mind on the mere care for matter, and fit the soul to live but as from day to day, with its scornful cry, "A fig for immortality and laurels!" An author for bread! Oh, miserable calling! was there something grand and holy, after all, even in Chatterton's despair!

CHAPTER VI.

The villanous *Beehive!* Bread was worked out of it, certainly; but fame, but hope for the future — certainly not. Milton's *Paradise Lost* would have perished without a sound, had it appeared in the *Beehive.*

Fine things were there in a fragmentary crude state, composed by Burley himself. At the end of a week they were dead and forgotten—never read by one man of education and taste; taken simultaneously and indifferently with shallow politics and wretched essays, yet selling, perhaps, twenty or thirty thousand copies—an immense sale;—and nothing got out of them but bread and brandy!

"What more would you have?" cried John Burley. "Did not stern old Sam Johnson say he could never write but from want?"

"He might say it," answered Leonard; "but he never meant posterity to believe him. And he would have died of want, I suspect, rather than have written *Rasselas* for the *Beehive!* Want is a grand thing," continued the boy, thoughtfully. "A parent of grand things. Necessity is strong, and should give us its own strength; but Want should shatter asunder, with its very writhings, the walls of our prison-house, and not sit contented with the allowance the jail gives us in exchange for our work."

"There is no prison-house to a man who calls upon Bacchus —stay—I will translate to you Schiller's Dithyramb. 'Then see I Bacchus—then up come Cupid and Phœbus, and all the Celestials are filling my dwelling.'"

Breaking into impromptu careless rhymes, Burley threw off a rude but spirited translation of that divine lyric.

"O materialist!" cried the boy, with his bright eyes suffused. "Schiller calls on the gods to take him to their heaven with him; and you would debase the gods to a gin palace."

"Ho, ho!" cried Burley, with his giant laugh. "Drink, and you will understand the Dithyramb."

CHAPTER VII.

SUDDENLY one morning, as Leonard sate with Burley, a fashionable cabriolet, with a very handsome horse, stopped at the door—a loud knock—a quick step on the stairs, and Randal Leslie entered. Leonard recognised him, and started. Randal glanced at him in surprise, and then, with a tact that showed he had already learned to profit by London life, after shaking hands with Burley, approached, and said with some successful attempt at ease, "Unless I am not mistaken, sir, we have met before. If you remember me, I hope all boyish quarrels are forgotten?"

Leonard bowed, and his heart was still good enough to be softened.

"Where could you two ever have met?" asked Burley.

"In a village green, and in single combat," answered Randal, smiling; and he told the story of the Battle of the Stocks, with a well-bred jest on himself. Burley laughed at the story. "But," said he, when this laugh was over, "my young friend had better have remained guardian of the village stocks, than come to London in search of such fortune as lies at the bottom of an ink-horn."

"Ah," said Randal, with the secret contempt which men elaborately cultivated are apt to feel for those who seek to educate themselves—"ah, you make literature your calling, sir? At what school did you conceive a taste for letters?—not very common at our great public schools."

"I am at school now for the first time," answered Leonard, drily.

"Experience is the best schoolmistress," said Burley; "and

that was the maxim of Goethe, who had book-learning enough, in all conscience."

Randal slightly shrugged his shoulders, and, without wasting another thought on Leonard, peasant-born and self-taught, took his seat, and began to talk to Burley upon a political question, which made then the war-cry between the two great Parliamentary parties. It was a subject in which Burley showed much general knowledge; and Randal, seeming to differ from him, drew forth alike his information and his argumentative powers. The conversation lasted more than an hour.

"I can't quite agree with you," said Randal, taking his leave; "but you must allow me to call again—will the same hour to-morrow suit you?"

"Yes," said Burley.

Away went the young man in his cabriolet. Leonard watched him from the window.

For five days, consecutively, did Randal call and discuss the question in all its bearings; and Burley, after the second day, got interested in the matter, looked up his authorities—refreshed his memory—and even spent an hour or two in the Library of the British Museum.

By the fifth day, Burley had really exhausted all that could well be said on his side of the question.

Leonard, during these colloquies, had sate apart seemingly absorbed in reading, and secretly stung by Randal's disregard of his presence. For indeed that young man, in his superb self-esteem, and in the absorption of his ambitious projects, scarce felt even curiosity as to Leonard's rise above his earlier station, and looked on him as a mere journeyman of Burley's. But the self-taught are keen and quick observers. And Leonard had remarked, that Randal seemed more as one playing a part for some private purpose, than arguing in earnest; and that, when he rose and said, "Mr Burley, you have convinced me," it was not with the modesty of a sincere reasoner, but the triumph of one who has gained his end. But so struck, meanwhile, was our unheeded and silent listener, with Burley's power of generalisation, and the wide surface over which his information extended, that when Randal left the room the boy looked at

the slovenly purposeless man, and said aloud—"True; knowledge is *not* power."

"Certainly not," said Burley, drily—"the weakest thing in the world."

"Knowledge is power," muttered Randal Leslie, as, with a smile on his lip, he drove from the door.

Not many days after this last interview there appeared a short pamphlet; anonymous, but one which made a great impression on the town. It was on the subject discussed between Randal and Burley. It was quoted at great length in the newspapers. And Burley started to his feet one morning, and exclaimed, "My own thoughts!—my very words! Who the devil is this pamphleteer?"

Leonard took the newspaper from Burley's hand. The most flattering encomiums preceded the extracts, and the extracts were as stereotypes of Burley's talk.

"Can you doubt the author?" cried Leonard in deep disgust and ingenuous scorn. "The young man who came to steal your brains, and turn your knowledge—"

"Into power," interrupted Burley, with a laugh, but it was a laugh of pain. "Well, this was very mean; I shall tell him so when he comes."

"He will come no more," said Leonard. Nor did Randal come again. But he sent Mr Burley a copy of the pamphlet with a polite note, saying, with candid but careless acknowledgment, that "he had profited much by Mr Burley's hints and remarks."

And now it was in all the papers, that the pamphlet which had made so great a noise was by a very young man, Mr Audley Egerton's relation. And high hopes were expressed of the future career of Mr Randal Leslie.

Burley still attempted to laugh, and still his pain was visible. Leonard most cordially despised and hated Randal Leslie, and his heart moved to Burley with noble but perilous compassion. In his desire to soothe and comfort the man whom he deemed cheated out of fame, he forgot the caution he had hitherto imposed on himself, and yielded more and more to the charm of that wasted intellect. He accompanied Burley now to the haunts to which his friend went to spend his evenings; and more and more—though gradually, and with many a recoil and self-rebuke—

there crept over him the cynic's contempt for glory, and miserable philosophy of debased content.

Randal had risen into grave repute upon the strength of Burley's knowledge. But, had Burley written the pamphlet, would the same repute have attended *him?* Certainly not. Randal Leslie brought to that knowledge qualities all his own—a style simple, strong, and logical; a certain tone of good society, and allusions to men and to parties that showed his connection with a cabinet minister, and proved that he had profited no less by Egerton's talk than Burley's.

Had Burley written the pamphlet, it would have showed more genius, it would have had humour and wit, but have been so full of whims and quips, sins against taste, and defects in earnestness, that it would have failed to create any serious sensation. Here, then, there was something else besides knowledge, by which knowledge became power. Knowledge must not smell of the brandy bottle.

Randal Leslie might be mean in his plagiarism, but he turned the useless into use. And so far he was original.

But one's admiration, after all, rests where Leonard's rested—with the poor, riotous, lawless, big fallen man.

Burley took himself off to the Brent, and fished again for the one-eyed perch. Leonard accompanied him. His feelings were indeed different from what they had been when he had reclined under the old tree, and talked with Helen of the future. But it was almost pathetic to see how Burley's nature seemed to alter, as he strayed along the banks of the rivulet, and discoursed of his own boyhood. The man then seemed restored to something of the innocence of the child. He cared, in truth, little for the perch, which continued intractable, but he enjoyed the air and the sky, the rustling grass, and the murmuring waters. These excursions to the haunts of youth seemed to rebaptise him, and then his eloquence took a pastoral character, and Isaac Walton himself would have loved to hear him. But as he got back into the smoke of the metropolis, and the gas-lamps made him forget the ruddy sunset, and the soft evening star, the gross habits reassumed their sway; and on he went with his swaggering reckless step to the orgies in which his abused intellect flamed forth, and then sank into the socket quenched and rayless.

CHAPTER VIII.

HELEN was seized with profound and anxious sadness. Leonard had been three or four times to see her, and each time she saw a change in him that excited all her fears. He seemed, it is true, more shrewd, more worldly-wise, more fitted, it might be, for coarse daily life; but, on the other hand, the freshness and glory of his youth were waning slowly. His aspirings drooped earthward. He had not mastered the Practical, and moulded its uses with the strong hand of the Spiritual Architect, of the Ideal Builder: the Practical was overpowering himself. She grew pale when he talked of Burley, and shuddered, poor little Helen! when she found he was daily and almost nightly in a companionship which, with her native honest prudence, she saw so unsuited to strengthen him in his struggles, and aid him against temptation. She almost groaned when, pressing him as to his pecuniary means, she found his old terror of debt seemed fading away, and the solid healthful principles he had taken from his village were loosening fast. Under all, it is true, there was what a wiser and older person than Helen would have hailed as the redeeming promise. But that something was *grief*—a sublime grief in his own sense of falling—in his own impotence against the Fate he had provoked and coveted. The sublimity of that grief Helen could not detect: she saw only that it *was* grief, and she grieved with it, letting it excuse every fault—making her more anxious to comfort, in order that she might save. Even from the first, when Leonard had exclaimed, "Ah, Helen, why did you ever leave me?" she had revolved the idea of return to him; and when in the boy's last visit he told her that Burley, persecuted by duns, was about

to fly from his present lodgings, and take his abode with Leonard in the room she had left vacant, all doubt was over. She resolved to sacrifice the safety and shelter of the home assured her. She resolved to come back and share Leonard's penury and struggles, and save the old room, wherein she had prayed for him, from the tempter's dangerous presence. Should she burden him? No; she had assisted her father by many little female arts in needle and fancy work. She had improved herself in these during her sojourn with Miss Starke. She could bring her share to the common stock. Possessed with this idea, she determined to realise it before the day on which Leonard had told her Burley was to move his quarters. Accordingly she rose very early one morning; she wrote a pretty and grateful note to Miss Starke, who was fast asleep, left it on the table, and, before any one was astir, stole from the house, her little bundle on her arm. She lingered an instant at the garden-gate, with a remorseful sentiment—a feeling that she had ill-repaid the cold and prim protection that Miss Starke had shown her. But sisterly love carried all before it. She closed the gate with a sigh, and went on.

She arrived at the lodging-house before Leonard was up, took possession of her old chamber, and, presenting herself to Leonard, as he was about to go forth, said, (story-teller that she was,)—"I am sent away, brother, and I have come to you to take care of me. Do not let us part again. But you must be very cheerful and very happy, or I shall think that I am sadly in your way."

Leonard at first did look cheerful, and even happy; but then he thought of Burley, and then of his own means of supporting her, and was embarrassed, and began questioning Helen as to the possibility of reconciliation with Miss Starke. And Helen said gravely, "Impossible—do not ask it, and do not go near her."

Then Leonard thought she had been humbled and insulted, and remembered that she was a gentleman's child, and felt for her wounded pride—he was so proud himself. Yet still he was embarrassed.

"Shall I keep the purse again, Leonard?" said Helen coaxingly.

"Alas!" replied Leonard, "the purse is empty."

"That is very naughty in the purse," said Helen, "since you put so much into it."

"I?"

"Did not you say that you made, at least, a guinea a-week?"

"Yes: but Burley takes the money; and then, poor fellow! as I owe all to him, I have not the heart to prevent him spending it as he likes."

"Please, I wish you could settle the month's rent," said the landlady, suddenly showing herself. She said it civilly, but with firmness.

Leonard coloured. "It shall be paid to-day."

Then he pressed his hat on his head, and, putting Helen gently aside, went forth.

"Speak to *me* in future, kind Mrs Smedley," said Helen with the air of a housewife. "*He* is always in study, and must not be disturbed."

The landlady—a good woman, though she liked her rent—smiled benignly. She was fond of Helen, whom she had known of old.

"I am so glad you are come back; and perhaps now the young man will not keep such late hours. I meant to give him warning, but—"

"But he will be a great man one of these days, and you must bear with him now." And Helen kissed Mrs Smedley, and sent her away half inclined to cry.

Then Helen busied herself in the rooms. She found her father's box, which had been duly forwarded. She re-examined its contents, and wept as she touched each humble and pious relic. But her father's memory itself thus seemed to give this home a sanction which the former had not; and she rose quietly and began mechanically to put things in order, sighing as she saw all so neglected, till she came to the rose-tree, and that alone showed heed and care. "Dear Leonard!" she murmured, and the smile resettled on her lips.

CHAPTER IX.

Nothing, perhaps, could have severed Leonard from Burley but Helen's return to his care. It was impossible for him, even had there been another room in the house vacant, (which there was not,) to install this noisy riotous son of the Muse by Bacchus, talking at random, and smelling of spirits, in the same dwelling with an innocent, delicate, timid, female child. And Leonard could not leave her alone all the twenty-four hours. She restored a home to him, and imposed its duties. He therefore told Mr Burley that in future he should write and study in his own room, and hinted with many a blush, and as delicately as he could, that it seemed to him that whatever he obtained from his pen ought to be halved with Burley, to whose interest he owed the employment, and from whose books or whose knowledge he took what helped to maintain it; but that the other half, if his, he could no longer afford to spend upon feasts or libations. He had another life to provide for.

Burley pooh-poohed the notion of taking half his coadjutor's earning, with much grandeur, but spoke very fretfully of Leonard's sober appropriation of the other half; and, though a good-natured warm-hearted man, felt extremely indignant against the sudden interposition of poor Helen. However, Leonard was firm; and then Burley grew sullen, and so they parted. But the rent was still to be paid. How? Leonard for the first time thought of the pawnbroker. He had clothes to spare, and Riccabocca's watch. No: that last he shrank from applying to such base uses.

He went home at noon, and met Helen at the street door. She too had been out, and her soft cheek was rosy red with

unwonted exercise and the sense of joy. She had still preserved the few gold pieces which Leonard had taken back to her on his first visit to Miss Starke's. She had now gone out and bought wools and implements for work; and meanwhile she had paid the rent.

Leonard did not object to the work, but he blushed deeply when he knew about the rent, and was very angry. He paid back to her that night what she had advanced; and Helen wept silently at his pride, and wept more when she saw the next day a woeful hiatus in his wardrobe.

But Leonard now worked at home, and worked resolutely; and Helen sate by his side, working too; so that next day, and the next, slipped peacefully away, and in the evening of the second he asked her to walk out in the fields. She sprang up joyously at the invitation, when bang went the door, and in reeled John Burley—drunk:—And so drunk!

CHAPTER X.

And with Burley there reeled in another man—a friend of his—a man who had been a wealthy trader and once well to do, but who, unluckily, had literary tastes, and was fond of hearing Burley talk. So, since he had known the wit, his business had fallen from him, and he had passed through the Bankrupt Court. A very shabby-looking dog he was, indeed, and his nose was redder than Burley's.

John made a drunken dash at poor Helen. "So you are the Pentheus in petticoats who defies Bacchus," cried he; and therewith he roared out a verse from Euripides. Helen ran away, and Leonard interposed.

"For shame, Burley!"

"He's drunk," said Mr Douce the bankrupt trader—"very drunk—don't mind—him. I say, sir, I hope we don't intrude. Sit still, Burley, sit still, and talk, do—that's a good man. You should hear him—ta—ta—talk, sir."

Leonard meanwhile had got Helen out of the room, into her own, and begged her not to be alarmed, and keep the door locked. He then returned to Burley, who had seated himself on the bed, trying wondrous hard to keep himself upright; while Mr Douce was striving to light a short pipe that he carried in his button-hole—without having filled it—and, naturally failing in that attempt, was now beginning to weep.

Leonard was deeply shocked and revolted for Helen's sake; but it was hopeless to make Burley listen to reason. And how could the boy turn out of his room the man to whom he was under obligations?

Meanwhile there smote upon Helen's shrinking ears loud

jarring talk and maudlin laughter, and cracked attempts at jovial songs. Then she heard Mrs Smedley in Leonard's room, remonstrating; and Burley's laugh was louder than before, and Mrs Smedley, who was a meek woman, evidently got frightened, and was heard in precipitate retreat. Long and loud talk recommenced, Burley's great voice predominant, Mr Douce chiming in with hiccupy broken treble. Hour after hour this lasted, for want of the drink that would have brought it to a premature close. And Burley gradually began to talk himself somewhat sober. Then Mr Douce was heard descending the stairs, and silence followed. At dawn, Leonard knocked at Helen's door. She opened it at once, for she had not gone to bed.

"Helen," said he very sadly, "you cannot continue here. I must find out some proper home for you. This man has served me when all London was friendless, and he tells me that he has nowhere else to go—that the bailiffs are after him. He has now fallen asleep. I will go and find you some lodging close at hand—for I cannot expel him who has protected me; and yet you cannot be under the same roof with him. My own good angel, I must lose you."

He did not wait for her answer, but hurried down the stairs.

The morning looked through the shutterless panes in Leonard's garret, and the birds began to chirp from the elm-tree, when Burley rose and shook himself, and stared round. He could not quite make out where he was. He got hold of the water-jug, which he emptied at three draughts, and felt greatly refreshed. He then began to reconnoitre the chamber—looked at Leonard's MSS.—peeped into the drawers—wondered where the devil Leonard himself had gone to—and finally amused himself by throwing down the fire-irons, ringing the bell, and making all the noise he could, in the hopes of attracting the attention of somebody or other, and procuring himself his morning dram.

In the midst of this *charivari* the door opened softly, but as if with a resolute hand, and the small quiet form of Helen stood

before the threshold. Burley turned round, and the two looked at each other for some moments with silent scrutiny.

BURLEY, (composing his features into their most friendly expression.)—"Come hither, my dear. So you are the little girl whom I saw with Leonard on the banks of the Brent, and you have come back to live with him—and I have come to live with him too. You shall be our little housekeeper, and I will tell you the story of Prince Prettyman, and a great many others not to be found in *Mother Goose*. Meanwhile, my dear little girl, here's sixpence—just run out and change this for its worth in rum."

HELEN, (coming slowly up to Mr Burley, and still gazing earnestly into his face.)—"Ah, sir, Leonard says you have a kind heart, and that you have served him—he cannot ask you to leave the house; and so I, who have never served him, am to go hence and live alone."

BURLEY, (moved.)—"You go, my little lady?—and why? Can we not all live together?"

HELEN.—"No, sir. I left everything to come to Leonard, for we had met first at my father's grave. But you rob me of him, and I have no other friend on earth."

BURLEY, (discomposed.)—"Explain yourself. Why must you leave him because I come?"

Helen looks at Mr Burley again, long and wistfully, but makes no answer.

BURLEY, (with a gulp.)—"Is it because he thinks I am not fit company for you?"

Helen bowed her head.

Burley winced, and after a moment's pause said,—"He is right."

HELEN, (obeying the impulse at her heart, springs forward and takes Burley's hand.)—"Ah, sir," she cried, "before he knew you he was so different: then he was cheerful—then, even when his first disappointment came, I grieved and wept; but I felt he would conquer still—for his heart was so good and pure. Oh, sir, don't think I reproach you; but what is to become of him if—if—No, it is not for myself I speak. I know that if I was here, that if he had me to care for, he would come home

early—and work patiently—and—and—that I might save him. But now when I am gone, and you live with him—you to whom he is grateful, you whom he would follow against his own conscience, (you must see that, sir)—what is to become of him?"

Helen's voice died in sobs.

Burley took three or four long strides through the room;—he was greatly agitated. "I am a demon," he murmured. "I never saw it before—but it is true—I should be this boy's ruin." Tears stood in his eyes, he paused abruptly, made a clutch at his hat, and turned to the door.

Helen stopped the way, and, taking him gently by the arm, said,—"Oh, sir, forgive me—I have pained you;" and looked up at him with a compassionate expression, that indeed made the child's sweet face as that of an angel.

Burley bent down as if to kiss her, and then drew back—perhaps with a sentiment that his lips were not worthy to touch that innocent brow.

"If I had had a sister—a child like you, little one," he muttered, "perhaps I too might have been saved in time. Now—"

"Ah, now you may stay, sir; I don't fear you any more."

"No, no; you would fear me again ere night-time, and I might not be always in the right mood to listen to a voice like yours, child. Your Leonard has a noble heart and rare gifts. He should rise yet, and he shall. I will not drag him into the mire. Good-bye—you will see me no more." He broke from Helen, cleared the stairs with a bound, and was out of the house.

When Leonard returned he was surprised to hear his unwelcome guest was gone—but Helen did not venture to tell him of her interposition. She knew instinctively how such officiousness would mortify and offend the pride of man—but she never again spoke harshly of poor Burley. Leonard supposed that he should either see or hear of the humourist in the course of the day. Finding he did not, he went in search of him at his old haunts; but no trace. He inquired at the *Beehive* if they knew there of his new address, but no tidings of Burley could be obtained.

As he came home disappointed and anxious, for he felt uneasy

as to the disappearance of his wild friend, Mrs Smedley met him at the door.

"Please, sir, suit yourself with another lodging," said she. "I can have no such singings and shoutings going on at night in my house. And that poor little girl, too!—you should be ashamed of yourself."

Leonard frowned, and passed by.

CHAPTER XI.

Meanwhile, on leaving Helen, Burley strode on; and, as if by some better instinct, for he was unconscious of his own steps, he took the way towards the still green haunts of his youth. When he paused at length, he was already before the door of a rural cottage, standing alone in the midst of fields, with a little farmyard at the back; and far through the trees in front was caught a glimpse of the winding Brent.

With this cottage Burley was familiar; it was inhabited by a good old couple who had known him from a boy. There he habitually left his rods and fishing-tackle; there, for intervals in his turbid riotous life, he had sojourned for two or three days together—fancying the first day that the country was a heaven, and convinced before the third that it was a purgatory.

An old woman, of neat and tidy exterior, came forth to greet him.

"Ah, Master John," said she, clasping his nerveless hand—"well, the fields be pleasant now—I hope you are come to stay a bit? Do; it will freshen you: you lose all the fine colour you had once, in Lunnon town."

"I will stay with you, my kind friend," said Burley with unusual meekness—"I can have the old room, then?"

"Oh, yes, come and look at it. I never let it now to any one but you—never have let it since the dear beautiful lady with the angel's face went away. Poor thing, what could have become of her?"

Thus speaking, while Burley listened not, the old woman drew him within the cottage, and led him up the stairs into a room that might have well become a better house, for it was

furnished with taste, and even elegance. A small cabinet pianoforte stood opposite the fireplace, and the window looked upon pleasant meads and tangled hedgerows, and the narrow windings of the blue rivulet. Burley sank down exhausted, and gazed wistfully from the casement.

"You have not breakfasted?" said the hostess anxiously.

"No."

"Well, the eggs are fresh laid, and you would like a rasher of bacon, Master John? And if you *will* have brandy in your tea, I have some that you left long ago in your own bottle."

Burley shook his head. "No brandy, Mrs Goodyer; only fresh milk. I will see whether I can yet coax Nature."

Mrs Goodyer did not know what was meant by coaxing Nature, but she said, "Pray do, Master John," and vanished.

That day Burley went out with his rod, and he fished hard for the one-eyed perch: but in vain. Then he roved along the stream with his hands in his pocket, whistling. He returned to the cottage at sunset, partook of the fare provided for him, abstained from the brandy, and felt dreadfully low. He called for pen, ink, and paper, and sought to write, but could not achieve two lines. He summoned Mrs Goodyer, "Tell your husband to come and sit and talk."

Up came old Jacob Goodyer, and the great wit bade him tell him all the news of the village. Jacob obeyed willingly, and Burley at last fell asleep. The next day it was much the same, only at dinner he had up the brandy bottle, and finished it: and he did *not* have up Jacob, but he contrived to write.

The third day it rained incessantly. "Have you no books, Mrs Goodyer?" asked poor John Burley.

"Oh, yes, some that the dear lady left behind her; and perhaps you would like to look at some papers in her own writing?"

"No, not the papers—all women scribble, and all scribble the same things. Get me the books."

The books were brought up—poetry and essays—John knew them by heart. He looked out on the rain, and at evening the rain had ceased. He rushed to his hat and fled.

"Nature, Nature!" he exclaimed when he was out in the air

and hurrying by the dripping hedgerows, "you are not to be coaxed by me! I have jilted you shamefully, I own it; you are a female, and unforgiving. I don't complain. You may be very pretty, but you are the stupidest and most tiresome companion that ever I met with. Thank heaven, I am not married to you!"

Thus John Burley made his way into town, and paused at the first public-house. Out of that house he came with a jovial air, and on he strode towards the heart of London. Now he is in Leicester Square, and he gazes on the foreigners who stalk that region, and hums a tune; and now from yonder alley two forms emerge, and dog his careless footsteps; now through the maze of passages towards St Martin's he threads his path, and, anticipating an orgy as he nears his favourite haunts, jingles the silver in his pockets; and now the two forms are at his heels.

"Hail to thee, O Freedom!" muttered John Burley, "thy dwelling is in cities, and thy palace is the tavern."

"In the king's name," quoth a gruff voice; and John Burley feels the horrid and familiar tap on the shoulder.

The two bailiffs who dogged have seized their prey.

"At whose suit?" asked John Burley falteringly.

"Mr Cox, the wine-merchant."

"Cox! A man to whom I gave a cheque on my bankers, not three months ago!"

"But it warn't cashed."

"What does that signify?—the intention was the same. A good heart takes the will for the deed. Cox is a monster of ingratitude; and I withdraw my custom."

"Sarve him right. Would your honour like a jarvey?"

"I would rather spend the money on something else," said John Burley. "Give me your arm, I am not proud. After all, thank heaven, I shall not sleep in the country."

And John Burley made a night of it in the Fleet.

CHAPTER XII.

Miss Starke was one of those ladies who pass their lives in the direst of all civil strife—war with their servants. She looked upon the members of that class as the unrelenting and sleepless enemies of the unfortunate householders condemned to employ them. She thought they ate and drank to their villanous utmost, in order to ruin their benefactors—that they lived in one constant conspiracy with one another and the tradesmen, the object of which was to cheat and pilfer. Miss Starke was a miserable woman. As she had no relations or friends who cared enough for her to share her solitary struggle against her domestic foes; and her income, though easy, was an annuity that died with herself, thereby reducing various nephews, nieces, or cousins, to the strict bounds of a natural affection—that did not exist; and as she felt the want of some friendly face amidst this world of distrust and hate, so she had tried the resource of venal companions. But the venal companions had never staid long—either they disliked Miss Starke, or Miss Starke disliked them. Therefore the poor woman had resolved upon bringing up some little girl whose heart, as she said to herself, would be fresh and uncorrupted, and from whom she might expect gratitude. She had been contented, on the whole, with Helen, and had meant to keep that child in her house as long as she (Miss Starke) remained upon the earth—perhaps some thirty years longer; and then, having carefully secluded her from marriage, and other friendship, to leave her nothing but the regret of having lost so kind a benefactress. Conformably with this notion, and in order to secure the affections of the child, Miss Starke had relaxed the frigid austerity natural to her

manner and mode of thought, and been kind to Helen in an iron way. She had neither slapped nor pinched her, neither had she starved. She had allowed her to see Leonard, according to the agreement made with Dr Morgan, and had laid out tenpence on cakes, besides contributing fruit from her garden for the first interview—a hospitality she did not think it fit to renew on subsequent occasions. In return for this, she conceived she had purchased the right to Helen bodily and spiritually, and nothing could exceed her indignation when she rose one morning and found the child had gone. As it never had occurred to her to ask Leonard's address, though she suspected Helen had gone to him, she was at a loss what to do, and remained for twenty-four hours in a state of inane depression. But then she began to miss the child so much that her energies woke, and she persuaded herself that she was actuated by the purest benevolence in trying to reclaim this poor creature from the world into which Helen had thus rashly plunged.

Accordingly, she put an advertisement into the *Times*, to the following effect, liberally imitated from one by which, in former years, she had recovered a favourite Blenheim :—

TWO GUINEAS REWARD.

STRAYED, from Ivy Cottage, Highgate, a Little Girl—answers to the name of Helen; with blue eyes and brown hair; white muslin frock, and straw hat with blue ribbons. Whoever will bring the same to Ivy Cottage, shall receive the above Reward.

N.B.—Nothing more will be offered.

Now, it so happened that Mrs Smedley had put an advertisement in the *Times* on her own account, relative to a niece of hers who was coming from the country, and for whom she desired to find a situation. So, contrary to her usual habit, she sent for the newspaper, and, close by her own advertisement, she saw Miss Starke's.

It was impossible that she could mistake the description of Helen; and, as this advertisement caught her eye the very day after the whole house had been disturbed and scandalised by Burley's noisy visit, and on which she had resolved to get rid of

a lodger who received such visitors, the good-hearted woman was delighted to think that she could restore Helen to some safe home. While thus thinking, Helen herself entered the kitchen where Mrs Smedley sate, and the landlady had the imprudence to point out the advertisement, and talk, as she called it, "seriously" to the little girl.

Helen in vain and with tears entreated her to take no step in reply to the advertisement. Mrs Smedley felt it was an affair of duty, and was obdurate, and shortly afterwards put on her bonnet and left the house. Helen conjectured that she was on her way to Miss Starke's, and her whole soul was bent on flight. Leonard had gone to the office of the *Beehive* with his MSS.; but she packed up all their joint effects, and, just as she had done so, he returned. She communicated the news of the advertisement, and said she should be so miserable if compelled to go back to Miss Starke's, and implored him so pathetically to save her from such sorrow that he at once assented to her proposal of flight. Luckily, little was owing to the landlady—that little was left with the maid-servant; and, profiting by Mrs Smedley's absence, they escaped without scene or conflict. Their effects were taken by Leonard to a stand of hackney vehicles, and then left at a coach-office, while they went in search of lodgings. It was wise to choose an entirely new and remote district; and before night they were settled in an attic in Lambeth.

CHAPTER XIII.

As the reader will expect, no trace of Burley could Leonard find: the humourist had ceased to communicate with the *Beehive*. But Leonard grieved for Burley's sake; and, indeed, he missed the intercourse of the large wrong mind. But he settled down by degrees to the simple loving society of his child-companion, and in that presence grew more tranquil. The hours in the daytime that he did not pass at work he spent as before, picking up knowledge at bookstalls; and at dusk he and Helen would stroll out—sometimes striving to escape from the long suburb into fresh rural air; more often wandering to and fro the bridge that led to glorious Westminster—London's classic land—and watching the vague lamps reflected on the river. This haunt suited the musing melancholy boy. He would stand long and with wistful silence by the balustrade—seating Helen thereon, that she too might look along the dark mournful waters which, dark though they be, still have their charm of mysterious repose.

As the river flowed between the world of roofs, and the roar of human passions on either side, so in those two hearts flowed Thought—and all they knew of London was its shadow.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE appeared in the *Beehive* certain very truculent political papers—papers very like the tracts in the Tinker's bag. Leonard did not heed them much, but they made far more sensation in the public that read the *Beehive* than Leonard's papers, full of rare promise though the last were. They greatly increased the sale of the periodical in the manufacturing towns, and began to awake the drowsy vigilance of the Home Office. Suddenly a descent was made upon the *Beehive*, and all its papers and plant. The editor saw himself threatened with a criminal prosecution, and the certainty of two years' imprisonment: he did not like the prospect, and disappeared. One evening, when Leonard, unconscious of these mischances, arrived at the door of the office, he found it closed. An agitated mob was before it, and a voice that was not new to his ear was haranguing the bystanders, with many imprecations against "tyrans." He looked, and, to his amaze, recognised in the orator Mr Sprott the Tinker.

The police came in numbers to disperse the crowd, and Mr Sprott prudently vanished. Leonard learned then what had befallen, and again saw himself without employment and the means of bread.

Slowly he walked back. "O knowledge, knowledge!—powerless, indeed!" he murmured.

As he thus spoke, a handbill in large capitals met his eyes on a dead wall—"Wanted, a few smart young men for India."

A crimp accosted him—"You would make a fine soldier, my man. You have stout limbs of your own." Leonard moved on.

"It has come back, then, to this. Brute physical force after all! O Mind, despair! O Peasant, be a machine again."

He entered his attic noiselessly, and gazed upon Helen as she sate at work, straining her eyes by the open window — with tender and deep compassion. She had not heard him enter, nor was she aware of his presence. Patient and still she sate, and the small fingers plied busily. He gazed, and saw that her cheek was pale and hollow, and the hands looked so thin! His heart was deeply touched, and at that moment he had not one memory of the baffled Poet, one thought that proclaimed the Egotist.

He approached her gently, laid his hand on her shoulder— "Helen, put on your shawl and bonnet, and walk out—I have much to say."

In a few moments she was ready, and they took their way to their favourite haunt upon the bridge. Pausing in one of the recesses or nooks, Leonard then began,—"Helen, we must part."

"Part?—Oh, brother!"

"Listen. All work that depends on mind is over for me—nothing remains but the labour of thews and sinews. I cannot go back to my village and say to all, 'My hopes were self-conceit, and my intellect a delusion!' I cannot. Neither in this sordid city can I turn menial or porter. I might be born to that drudgery, but my mind has, it may be unhappily, raised me above my birth. What, then, shall I do? I know not yet —serve as a soldier, or push my way to some wilderness afar, as an emigrant, perhaps. But whatever my choice, I must henceforth be alone; I have a home no more. But there is a home for you, Helen, a very humble one, (for you, too, so well born,) but very safe—the roof of—of—my peasant mother. She will love you for my sake, and—and—"

Helen clung to him trembling, and sobbed out, "Anything, anything you will. But I can work; I can make money, Leonard. I do, indeed, make money—you do not know how much —but enough for us both till better times come to you. Do not let us part."

"And I—a man, and born to labour, to be maintained by the work of an infant! No, Helen, do not so degrade me."

She drew back as she looked on his flushed brow, bowed her head submissively, and murmured, "Pardon."

"Ah," said Helen, after a pause, "if now we could but find my poor father's friend! I never so much cared for it before."

"Yes, he would surely provide for you."

"For *me!*" repeated Helen, in a tone of soft deep reproach, and she turned away her head to conceal her tears.

"You are sure you would remember him, if we met him by chance?"

"Oh yes. He was so different from all we see in this terrible city, and his eyes were like yonder stars, so clear and so bright; yet the light seemed to come from afar off, as the light does in yours, when your thoughts are away from all things round you. And then, too, his dog, whom he called Nero—I could not forget that."

"But his dog may not be always with him."

"But the bright clear eyes are! Ah, now you look up to heaven, and yours seem to dream like his."

Leonard did not answer, for his thoughts were indeed less on earth than struggling to pierce into that remote and mysterious heaven.

Both were silent long; the crowd passed them by unheedingly. Night deepened over the river, but the reflection of the lamplights on its waves was more visible than that of the stars. The beams showed the darkness of the strong current, and the craft that lay eastward on the tide, with sail-less spectral masts and black dismal hulks, looked deathlike in their stillness.

Leonard looked down, and the thought of Chatterton's grim suicide came back to his soul; and a pale scornful face, with luminous haunting eyes, seemed to look up from the stream, and murmur from livid lips,—"Struggle no more against the tides on the surface—all is calm and rest within the deep."

Starting in terror from the gloom of his reverie, the boy began to talk fast to Helen, and tried to soothe her with descriptions of the lowly home which he had offered.

He spoke of the light cares which she would participate with his mother, (for by that name he still called the widow,) and dwelt, with an eloquence that the contrast round him made

sincere and strong, on the happy rural life, the shadowy woodlands, the rippling corn-fields, the solemn lone church-spire soaring from the tranquil landscape. Flatteringly he painted the flowery terraces of the Italian exile, and the playful fountain that, even as he spoke, was flinging up its spray to the stars, through serene air untroubled by the smoke of cities, and untainted by the sinful sighs of men. He promised her the love and protection of natures akin to the happy scene: the simple affectionate mother—the gentle pastor—the exile wise and kind—Violante, with dark eyes full of the mystic thoughts that solitude calls from childhood,—Violante should be her companion.

"And oh!" cried Helen, "if life be thus happy there, return with me, return—return!"

"Alas!" murmured the boy, "if the hammer once strike the spark from the anvil, the spark must fly upward; it cannot fall back to earth until light has left it. Upward still, Helen—let me go upward still!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE next morning Helen was very ill—so ill that, shortly after rising, she was forced to creep back to bed. Her frame shivered—her eyes were heavy—her hand burned like fire. Fever had set in. Perhaps she might have caught cold on the bridge—perhaps her emotions had proved too much for her frame. Leonard, in great alarm, called in the nearest apothecary. The apothecary looked grave, and said there was danger. And danger soon declared itself—Helen became delirious. For several days she lay in this state, between life and death. Leonard then felt that all the sorrows of earth are light, compared with the fear of losing what we love. How valueless the envied laurel seemed beside the dying rose.

Thanks, perhaps, more to his heed and tending than to medical skill, she recovered sense at last—immediate peril was over. But she was very weak and reduced—her ultimate recovery doubtful — convalescence, at best, likely to be very slow.

But when she learned how long she had been thus ill, she looked anxiously at Leonard's face as he bent over her, and faltered forth—"Give me my work; I am strong enough for that now—it would amuse me."

Leonard burst into tears.

Alas! he had no work himself; all their joint money had melted away. The apothecary was not like good Dr Morgan; the medicines were to be paid for—and the rent. Two days before, Leonard had pawned Riccabocca's watch; and when the last shilling thus raised was gone, how should he support Helen? Nevertheless he conquered his tears, and assured her

that he had employment; and that so earnestly that she believed him, and sank into soft sleep. He listened to her breathing, kissed her forehead, and left the room. He turned into his own neighbouring garret, and, leaning his face on his hands, collected all his thoughts.

He must be a beggar at last. He must write to Mr Dale for money—Mr Dale, too, who knew the secret of his birth. He would rather have begged of a stranger—it seemed to add a new dishonour to his mother's memory for the child to beg of one who was acquainted with her shame. Had he himself been the only one to want and to starve, he would have sunk inch by inch into the grave of famine, before he would have so subdued his pride. But Helen, there on that bed—Helen needing, for weeks perhaps, all support, and illness making luxuries themselves like necessaries! Beg he must. And when he so resolved, had you but seen the proud bitter soul he conquered, you would have said—"This, which he thinks is degradation—this is heroism." Oh strange human heart! no epic ever written achieves the Sublime and the Beautiful which are graven, unread by human eye, in thy secret leaves. Of whom else should he beg? His mother had nothing, Riccabocca was poor, and the stately Violante, who had exclaimed, "Would that I were a man!"—he could not endure the thought that she should pity him, and despise. The Avenels! No—thrice No. He drew towards him hastily ink and paper, and wrote rapid lines, that were wrung from him as from the bleeding strings of life.

But the hour for the post had passed—the letter must wait till the next day; and three days at least would elapse before he could receive an answer. He left the letter on the table, and, stifling as for air, went forth. He crossed the bridge—he passed on mechanically — and was borne along by a crowd pressing towards the doors of Parliament. A debate that excited popular interest was fixed for that evening, and many bystanders collected in the street to see the members pass to and fro, or hear what speakers had yet risen to take part in the debate, or try to get orders for the gallery.

He halted amidst these loiterers, with no interest, indeed, in

common with them, but looking over their heads abstractedly towards the tall Funeral Abbey—imperial Golgotha of Poets, and Chiefs, and Kings.

Suddenly his attention was diverted to those around by the sound of a name—displeasingly known to him. "How are you, Randal Leslie?—coming to hear the debate?" said a member who was passing through the street.

"Yes; Mr Egerton promised to get me under the gallery. He is to speak himself to-night, and I have never heard him. As you are going into the House, will you remind him of his promise to me?"

"I can't now, for he is speaking already—and well too. I hurried from the Athenæum, where I was dining, on purpose to be in time, as I heard that his speech was making a great effect."

"This is very unlucky," said Randal. "I had no idea he would speak so early."

"C—— brought him up by a direct personal attack. But follow me; perhaps I can get you into the House; and a man like you, Leslie, from whom we expect great things some day, I can tell you, should not miss any such opportunity of knowing what this House of ours is on a field night. Come on!"

The member hurried towards the door; and as Randal followed him, a bystander cried—"That is the young man who wrote the famous pamphlet—Egerton's relation."

"Oh, indeed!" said another. "Clever man, Egerton—I am waiting for him."

"So am I."

"Why, you are not a constituent, as I am."

"No; but he has been very kind to my nephew, and I must thank him. You are a constituent—he is an honour to your town."

"So he is: Enlightened man!"

"And so generous!"

"Brings forward really good measures," quoth the politician.

"And clever young men," said the uncle.

Therewith one or two others joined in the praise of Audley Egerton, and many anecdotes of his liberality were told.

Leonard listened at first listlessly, at last with thoughtful

attention. He had heard Burley, too, speak highly of this generous statesman, who, without pretending to genius himself, appreciated it in others. He suddenly remembered, too, that Egerton was half-brother to the Squire. Vague notions of some appeal to this eminent person, not for charity, but employment to his mind, gleamed across him—inexperienced boy that he yet was! And, while thus meditating, the door of the House opened and out came Audley Egerton himself. A partial cheering, followed by a general murmur, apprised Leonard of the presence of the popular statesman. Egerton was caught hold of by some five or six persons in succession; a shake of the hand, a nod, a brief whispered word or two, sufficed the practised member for graceful escape; and soon, free from the crowd, his tall erect figure passed on, and turned towards the bridge. He paused at the angle and took out his watch, looking at it by the lamp-light.

"Harley will be here soon," he muttered—"he is always punctual; and now that I have spoken, I can give him an hour or so. That is well."

As he replaced his watch in his pocket, and re-buttoned his coat over his firm broad chest, he lifted his eyes, and saw a young man standing before him."

"Do you want me?" asked the statesman, with the direct brevity of his practical character.

"Mr Egerton," said the young man, with a voice that slightly trembled, and yet was manly amidst emotion, "you have a great name, and great power—I stand here in these streets of London without a friend, and without employment. I believe that I have it in me to do some nobler work than that of bodily labour, had I but one friend—one opening for my thoughts. And now I have said this, I scarcely know how, or why, but from despair, and the sudden impulse which that despair took from the praise that follows your success—I have nothing more to add."

Audley Egerton was silent for a moment, struck by the tone and address of the stranger; but the consummate and wary man of the world, accustomed to all manner of strange applications, and all varieties of imposture, quickly recovered from a passing and slight effect.

"Are you a native of ——?" (naming the town which the statesman represented.)

"No, sir."

"Well, young man, I am very sorry for you; but the good sense you must possess (for I judge of that by the education you have evidently received) must tell you that a public man, whatever be his patronage, has it too fully absorbed by claimants who have a right to demand it, to be able to listen to strangers."

He paused a moment, and, as Leonard stood silent, added, with more kindness than most public men so accosted would have showed—

"You say you are friendless;—poor fellow. In early life that happens to many of us, who find friends enough before the close. Be honest, and well-conducted; lean on yourself, not on strangers; work with the body if you can't with the mind; and, believe me, that advice is all I can give you, unless this trifle,"—and the minister held out a crown piece.

Leonard bowed, shook his head sadly, and walked away, Egerton looked after him with a slight pang.

"Pooh!" said he to himself, "there must be thousands in the same state in these streets of London. I cannot redress the necessities of civilisation. Well educated! It is not from ignorance henceforth that society will suffer—it is from over-educating the hungry thousands who, thus unfitted for manual toil, and with no career for mental, will some day or other stand like that boy in our streets, and puzzle wiser ministers than I am."

As Egerton thus mused, and passed on to the bridge, a bugle-horn rang merrily from the box of a gay four-in-hand. A drag-coach with superb blood-horses rattled over the causeway, and in the driver Egerton recognised his nephew—Frank Hazeldean.

The young Guardsman was returning, with a lively party of men, from dining at Greenwich; and the careless laughter of these children of pleasure floated far over the still river; it vexed the ear of the careworn statesman—sad, perhaps, with all his greatness, lonely amidst all his crowd of friends. It reminded him, perhaps, of his own youth, when such parties

and companionships were familiar to him, though through them all he had borne an ambitious aspiring soul—"*Le jeu, vaut-il la chandelle?*" said he, shrugging his shoulders.

The coach rolled rapidly past Leonard, as he stood leaning against the corner of the bridge, and the mire of the kennel splashed over him from the hoofs of the fiery horses. The laughter smote on his ear more discordantly than on the minister's, but it begot no envy.

"Life is a dark riddle," said he, smiting his breast.

And he walked slowly on, gained the recess where he had stood several nights before with Helen, and, dizzy with want of food, and worn out for want of sleep, he sank down into the dark corner; while the river that rolled under the arch of stone muttered dirge-like in his ear—as under the social key-stone wails and rolls on for ever the mystery of Human Discontent. Take comfort, O Thinker by the stream! 'Tis the river that founded and gave pomp to the city; and without the discontent, where were progress — what were Man? Take comfort, O THINKER! wherever the stream over which thou bendest, or beside which thou sinkest, weary and desolate, frets the arch that supports thee;—never dream that, by destroying the bridge, thou canst silence the moan of the wave!

CHAPTER XVI.

BEFORE a table, in the apartments appropriated to him in his father's house at Knightsbridge, sate Lord L'Estrange, sorting or destroying letters and papers—an ordinary symptom of change of residence. There are certain trifles by which a shrewd observer may judge of a man's disposition. Thus, ranged on the table, with some elegance, but with soldier-like precision, were sundry little relics of former days, hallowed by some sentiment of memory, or perhaps endeared solely by custom; which, whether he was in Egypt, Italy, or England, always made part of the furniture of Harley's room. Even the small, old-fashioned, and somewhat inconvenient inkstand in which he dipped the pen as he labelled the letters he put aside, belonged to the writing-desk which had been his pride as a schoolboy. Even the books that lay scattered round were not new works, not those to which we turn to satisfy the curiosity of an hour, or to distract our graver thoughts: they were chiefly either Latin or Italian poets, with many a pencil-mark on the margin; or books which, making severe demand on thought, require slow and frequent perusal, and become companions. Somehow or other, in remarking that even in dumb inanimate things the man was averse to change, and had the habit of attaching himself to whatever was connected with old associations, you might guess that he clung with pertinacity to affections more important, and you could better comprehend the freshness of his friendship for one so dissimilar in pursuits and character as Audley Egerton. An affection once admitted into the heart of Harley L'Estrange, seemed never to be questioned or reasoned with: it became tacitly fixed, as it were, into his own nature;

and little less than a revolution of his whole system could dislodge or disturb it.

Lord L'Estrange's hand rested now upon a letter in a stiff legible Italian character; and instead of disposing of it at once as he had done with the rest, he spread it before him, and re-read the contents. It was a letter from Riccabocca, received a few weeks since, and ran thus :—

Letter from Signor Riccabocca to Lord L'Estrange.

"I thank you, my noble friend, for judging of me with faith in my honour, and respect for my reverses.

"No, and thrice no, to all concessions, all overtures, all treaty with Giulio Franzini. I write the name, and my emotions choke me. I must pause, and cool back into disdain. It is over. Pass from that subject. But you have alarmed me. This sister! I have not seen her since her childhood; but she was brought up under *his* influence—she can but work as his agent. She wish to learn my residence! It can be but for some hostile and malignant purpose. I may trust in you—I know that. You say I may trust equally in the discretion of your friend. Pardon me—my confidence is not so elastic. A word may give the clue to my retreat. But, if discovered, what harm can ensue? An English roof protects me from Austrian despotism: true; but not the brazen tower of Danaë could protect me from Italian craft. And, were there nothing worse, it would be intolerable to me to live under the eyes of a relentless spy. Truly saith our proverb, 'He sleeps ill for whom the enemy wakes.' Look you, my friend, I have done with my old life—I wish to cast it from me as a snake its skin. I have denied myself all that exiles deem consolation. No pity for misfortune, no messages from sympathising friendship, no news from a lost and bereaved country follow me to my hearth under the skies of the stranger. From all these I have voluntarily cut myself off. I am as dead to the life I once lived as if the Styx rolled between *it* and me. With that sternness which is admissible only to the afflicted, I have denied myself even the consolation of your visits. I have told you fairly and simply that your presence would unsettle all my enforced and infirm philosophy,

and remind me only of the past, which I seek to blot from remembrance. You have complied on the one condition, that whenever I really want your aid I will ask it; and, meanwhile, you have generously sought to obtain me justice from the cabinets of ministers and in the courts of kings. I did not refuse your heart this luxury; for I have a child—(Ah! I have taught that child already to revere your name, and in her prayers it is not forgotten.) But now that you are convinced that even your zeal is unavailing, I ask you to discontinue attempts that may but bring the spy upon my track, and involve me in new misfortunes. Believe me, O brilliant Englishman, that I am satisfied and contented with my lot. I am sure it would not be for my happiness to change it. 'Chi non ha provato il male non conosce il bene.' (One does not know when one is well off till one has known misfortune.) You ask me how I live—I answer, *alla giornata*, (to the day)—not for the morrow, as I did once. I have accustomed myself to the calm existence of a village. I take interest in its details. There is my wife, good creature, sitting opposite to me, never asking what I write, or to whom, but ready to throw aside her work and talk the moment the pen is out of my hand. Talk—and what about? Heaven knows! But I would rather hear that talk, though on the affairs of a hamlet, than babble again with recreant nobles and blundering professors about commonwealths and constitutions. When I want to see how little those last influence the happiness of wise men, have I not Machiavel and Thucydides? Then, by and by, the Parson will drop in, and we argue. He never knows when he is beaten, so the argument is everlasting. On fine days I ramble out by a winding rill with my Violante, or stroll to my friend the Squire's, and see how healthful a thing is true pleasure; and on wet days I shut myself up, and mope, perhaps, till, hark! a gentle tap at the door, and in comes Violante, with her dark eyes, that shine out through reproachful tears—reproachful that I should mourn alone, while she is under my roof—so she puts her arms round me, and in five minutes all is sunshine within. What care we for your English grey clouds without?

"Leave me, my dear Lord—leave me to this quiet happy

passage towards old age, serener than the youth that I wasted so wildly; and guard well the secret on which my happiness depends.

"Now to yourself, before I close. Of that same *yourself* you speak too little, as of me too much. But I so well comprehend the profound melancholy that lies underneath the wild and fanciful humour with which you but suggest, as in sport, what you feel so in earnest. The laborious solitude of cities weighs on you. You are flying back to the *dolce far niente*—to friends few, but intimate; to life monotonous, but unrestrained; and even there the sense of loneliness will again seize upon you; and you do not seek, as I do, the annihilation of memory; your dead passions are turned to ghosts that haunt you, and unfit you for the living world. I see it all—I see it still, in your hurried fantastic lines, as I saw it when we two sat amidst the pines and beheld the blue lake stretched below;—I troubled by the shadow of the Future, you disturbed by that of the Past.

"Well, but you say, half seriously, half in jest, 'I *will* escape from this prison-house of memory; I will form new ties, like other men, and before it be too late; I *will* marry—Ay, but I must love—there is the difficulty'—difficulty—yes, and heaven be thanked for it! Recall all the unhappy marriages that have come to your knowledge—pray have not eighteen out of twenty been marriages for love? It always has been so, and it always will. Because, whenever we love deeply, we exact so much and forgive so little. Be content to find some one with whom your hearth and your honour are safe. You will grow to love what never wounds your heart—you will soon grow out of love with what must always disappoint your imagination. *Cospetto!* I wish my Jemima had a younger sister for you. Yet it was with a deep groan that I settled myself to a—Jemima.

"Now, I have written you a long letter, to prove how little I need of your compassion or your zeal. Once more let there be long silence between us. It is not easy for me to correspond with a man of your rank, and not incur the curious gossip of my still little pool of a world which the splash of a pebble can break into circles. I must take this over to a post-town some ten miles off, and drop it into the box by stealth.

"Adieu, dear and noble friend, gentlest heart and subtlest fancy that I have met in my walk through life. Adieu. Write me word when you have abandoned a day-dream and found a Jemima. "ALPHONSO.

"*P.S.*—For heaven's sake, caution and recaution your friend the minister not to drop a word to this woman that may betray my hiding-place."

"Is he really happy?" murmured Harley, as he closed the letter; and he sank for a few moments into a reverie.

"This life in a village—this wife in a lady who puts down her work to talk about villagers—what a contrast to Audley's full existence. And I cannot envy nor comprehend either—yet my own existence—what is it?"

He rose, and moved towards the window, from which a rustic stair descended to a green lawn—studded with larger trees than are often found in the grounds of a suburban residence. There were calm and coolness in the sight, and one could scarcely have supposed that London lay so near.

The door opened softly, and a lady, past middle age, entered; and, approaching Harley, as he still stood musing by the window, laid her hand on his shoulder. What character there is in a hand! Hers was a hand that Titian would have painted with elaborate care! Thin, white, and delicate—with the blue veins raised from the surface. Yet there was something more than mere patrician elegance in the form and texture. A true physiologist would have said at once, "there are intellect and pride in that hand, which seems to fix a hold where it rests; and, lying so lightly, yet will not be as lightly shaken off."

"Harley," said the lady—and Harley turned—"you do not deceive me by that smile," she continued sadly; "you were not smiling when I entered."

"It is rarely that we smile to ourselves, my dear mother; and I have done nothing lately so foolish as to cause me to smile *at* myself."

"My son," said Lady Lansmere, somewhat abruptly, but with great earnestness, "you come from a line of illustrious

ancestors; and methinks they ask from their tombs why the last of their race has no aim and no object—no interest—no home in the land which they served, and which rewarded them with its honours."

"Mother," said the soldier simply, "when the land was in danger I served it as my forefathers served—and my answer would be the scars on my breast."

"Is it only in danger that a country is served—only in war that duty is fulfilled? Do you think that your father, in his plain manly life of country gentleman, does not fulfil, though perhaps too obscurely, the objects for which aristocracy is created and wealth is bestowed?"

"Doubtless he does, ma'am—and better than his vagrant son ever can."

"Yet his vagrant son has received such gifts from nature—his youth was so rich in promise—his boyhood so glowed at the dream of glory!—"

"Ay," said Harley very softly, "it is possible—and all to be buried in a single grave!"

"The Countess started, and withdrew her hand from Harley's shoulder.

Lady Lansmere's countenance was not one that much varied in expression. She had in this, as in her cast of feature, little resemblance to her son.

Her features were slightly aquiline—the eyebrows of that arch which gives a certain majesty to the aspect: the lines round the mouth were habitually rigid and compressed. Her face was that of one who had gone through great emotion and subdued it. There was something formal, and even ascetic, in the character of her beauty, which was still considerable—in her air and in her dress. She might have suggested to you the idea of some Gothic baroness of old, half chatelaine, half abbess; you would see at a glance that she did not live in the light world round her, and disdained its fashion and its mode of thought; yet with all this rigidity it was still the face of the woman who has known human ties and human affections. And now, as she gazed long on Harley's quiet, saddened brow, it was the face of a mother.

"A single grave," she said, after a long pause. "And you were then but a boy, Harley! Can such a memory influence you even to this day! It is scarcely possible: it does not seem to me within the realities of man's life—though it might be of woman's."

"I believe," said Harley, half soliloquising, "that I have a great deal of the woman in me. Perhaps men who live much alone, and care not for men's objects, do grow tenacious of impressions, as your sex does. But oh," he cried aloud, and with a sudden change of countenance, "oh, the hardest and the coldest man would have felt as I do, had he known *her*—had he loved *her*. She was like no other woman I have ever met. Bright and glorious creature of another sphere! She descended on this earth, and darkened it when she passed away. It is no use striving. Mother, I have as much courage as our steel-clad fathers ever had. I have dared in battle and in deserts—against man and the wild beast—against the storm and the ocean—against the rude powers of Nature—dangers as dread as ever pilgrim or Crusader rejoiced to brave. But courage against that one memory! no, I have none!"

"Harley, Harley, you break my heart!" cried the Countess, clasping her hands.

"It is astonishing," continued her son, so wrapped in his own thoughts that he did not perhaps hear her outcry. "Yea, verily, it is astonishing, that considering the thousands of women I have seen and spoken with, I never see a face like hers—never hear a voice so sweet. And all this universe of life cannot afford me one look and one tone that can restore me to man's privilege—love. Well, well, well, life has other things yet—Poetry and Art live still—still smiles the heaven, and still wave the trees. Leave me to happiness in my own way."

The Countess was about to reply, when the door was thrown hastily open, and Lord Lansmere walked in.

The Earl was some years older than the Countess, but his placid face showed less wear and tear—a benevolent, kindly face, without any evidence of commanding intellect, but with no lack of sense in its pleasant lines. His form not tall, but upright, and with an air of consequence—a little pompous, but

good-humouredly so. The pomposity of the *Grand Seigneur*, who has lived much in provinces—whose will has been rarely disputed, and whose importance has been so felt and acknowledged as to react insensibly on himself;—an excellent man; but when you glanced towards the high brow and dark eye of the Countess, you marvelled a little how the two had come together, and, according to common report, lived so happily in the union.

"Ho, ho! my dear Harley," cried Lord Lansmere, rubbing his hands with an appearance of much satisfaction, "I have just been paying a visit to the Duchess."

"What Duchess, my dear father?"

"Why, your mother's first cousin, to be sure—the Duchess of Knaresborough, whom, to oblige me, you condescended to call upon; and delighted I am to hear that you admire Lady Mary—"

"She is very high-bred, and rather—high-nosed," answered Harley. Then observing that his mother looked pained, and his father disconcerted, he added seriously, "But handsome certainly."

"Well, Harley," said the Earl, recovering himself, "the Duchess, taking advantage of our connection to speak freely, has intimated to me that Lady Mary has been no less struck with yourself; and, to come to the point, since you allow that it is time you should think of marrying, I do not know a more desirable alliance. What do you say, Katherine?"

"The Duke is of a family that ranks in history before the Wars of the Roses," said Lady Lansmere, with an air of deference to her husband; "and there has never been one scandal in its annals, nor one blot in its scutcheon. But I am sure my dear Lord must think that the Duchess should not have made the first overture—even to a friend and a kinsman?"

"Why, we are old-fashioned people," said the Earl, rather embarrassed, "and the Duchess is a woman of the world."

"Let us hope," said the Countess mildly, "that her daughter is not."

"I would not marry Lady Mary, if all the rest of the female sex were turned into apes," said Lord L'Estrange, with deliberate fervour.

"Good heavens!" cried the Earl, "what extraordinary language is this?" And pray why, sir?"

HARLEY.—"I can't say—there is no why in these cases. But, my dear father, you are not keeping faith with me."

LORD LANSMERE.—"How?"

HARLEY.—"You, and my Lady here, entreat me to marry—I promise to do my best to obey you; but on one condition—that I choose for myself, and take my time about it. Agreed on both sides. Whereon, off goes your Lordship—actually before noon, at an hour when no lady without a shudder could think of cold blonde and damp orange flowers—off goes your Lordship, I say, and commits poor Lady Mary and your unworthy son to a mutual admiration—which neither of us ever felt. Pardon me, my father—but this is grave. Again let me claim your promise—full choice for myself, and no reference to the Wars of the Roses. What war of the roses like that between Modesty and Love upon the cheek of the virgin!"

LADY LANSMERE.—"Full choice for yourself, Harley;—so be it. But we, too, named a condition—Did we not, Lansmere?"

The EARL, (puzzled.)—"Eh—did we? Certainly we did."

HARLEY.—"What was it?"

LADY LANSMERE.—"The son of Lord Lansmere can only marry the daughter of a gentleman."

The EARL.—"Of course—of course."

The blood rushed over Harley's fair face, and then as suddenly left it pale.

He walked away to the window—his mother followed him, and again laid her hand on his shoulder.

"You were cruel," said he, gently and in a whisper, as he winced under the touch of the hand. Then turning to the Earl, who was gazing at him in blank surprise—(it never occurred to Lord Lansmere that there could be a doubt of his son's marrying beneath the rank modestly stated by the Countess)—Harley stretched forth his hand, and said in his soft winning tone, "You have ever been most gracious to me, and most forbearing; it is but just that I should sacrifice the habits of an egotist, to gratify a wish which you so warmly entertain. I agree with you, too, that our race should not close in me—*Noblesse oblige.*

But you know I was ever romantic; and I must love where I marry—or, if not love, I must feel that my wife is worthy of all the love I could once have bestowed. Now, as to the vague word 'gentleman' that my mother employs—word that means so differently on different lips—I confess that I have a prejudice against young ladies brought up in the 'excellent foppery of the world,' as the daughters of gentlemen of our rank mostly are. I crave, therefore, the most liberal interpretation of this word 'gentleman.' And so long as there be nothing mean or sordid in the birth, habits, and education of the father of this bride to be, I trust you will both agree to demand nothing more—neither titles nor pedigree."

"Titles, no—assuredly," said Lady Lansmere; "they do not make gentlemen."

"Certainly not," said the Earl. "Many of our best families are untitled."

"Titles—no," repeated Lady Lansmere; "but ancestors—yes."

"Ah, my mother," said Harley, with his most sad and quiet smile, "it is fated that we shall never agree. The first of our race is ever the one we are most proud of; and pray, what ancestors had he? Beauty, virtue, modesty, intellect—if these are not nobility enough for a man, he is a slave to the dead."

With these words Harley took up his hat and made towards the door.

"You said yourself, '*Noblesse oblige*,'" said the Countess, following him to the threshold; "we have nothing more to add."

Harley slightly shrugged his shoulders, kissed his mother's hand, whistled to Nero, who started up from a doze by the window, and went his way.

"Does he really go abroad next week?" said the Earl.

"So he says."

"I am afraid there is no chance for Lady Mary," resumed Lord Lansmere, with a slight but melancholy smile.

"She has not intellect enough to charm him. She is not worthy of Harley," said the proud mother.

"Between you and me," rejoined the Earl, rather timidly, "I don't see what good his intellect does him. He could not be

more unsettled and useless if he were the merest dunce in the three kingdoms. And so ambitious as he was when a boy! Katherine, I sometimes fancy that you know what changed him."

"I! Nay, my dear Lord, it is a common change enough with the young, when of such fortunes; who find, when they enter life, that there is really little left for them to strive for. Had Harley been a poor man's son, it might have been different."

"I was born to the same fortunes as Harley," said the Earl, shrewdly, "and yet I flatter myself I am of some use to old England."

The Countess seized upon the occasion, complimented her Lord, and turned the subject.

CHAPTER XVII.

HARLEY spent his day in his usual desultory, lounging manner —dined in his quiet corner at his favourite club—Nero, not admitted into the club, patiently waited for him outside the door. The dinner over, dog and man, equally indifferent to the crowd, sauntered down that thoroughfare which, to the few who can comprehend the Poetry of London, has associations of glory and of woe sublime as any that the ruins of the dead elder world can furnish—thoroughfare that traverses what was once the courtyard of Whitehall, having to its left the site of the palace that lodged the royalty of Scotland—gains, through a narrow strait, that old isle of Thorney, in which Edward the Confessor received the ominous visit of the Conqueror—and, widening once more by the Abbey and the Hall of Westminster, then loses itself, like all memories of earthly grandeur, amidst humble passages and mean defiles.

Thus thought Harley L'Estrange—ever less amidst the actual world around him, than the images invoked by his own solitary soul—as he gained the Bridge, and saw the dull lifeless craft sleeping on the "Silent Way," once loud and glittering with the gilded barks of the antique Seignorie of England.

It was on that bridge that Audley Egerton had appointed to meet L'Estrange, at an hour when he calculated he could best steal a respite from debate. For Harley, with his fastidious dislike to all the resorts of his equals, had declined to seek his friend in the crowded regions of Bellamy's.

Harley's eye, as he passed along the bridge, was attracted by a still form, seated on the stones in one of the nooks, with its

face covered by its hands. "If I were a sculptor," said he to himself, "I should remember that image whenever I wished to convey the idea of *Despondency!*" He lifted his looks and saw, a little before him in the midst of the causeway, the firm erect figure of Audley Egerton. The moonlight was full on the bronzed countenance of the strong public man—with its lines of thought and care, and its vigorous but cold expression of intense self-control.

"And looking yonder," continued Harley's soliloquy, "I should remember that form, when I wished to hew out from the granite the idea of *Endurance.*"

"So you are come, and punctually," said Egerton, linking his arm in Harley's.

HARLEY.—"Punctually, of course, for I respect your time, and I will not detain you long. I presume you will speak to-night."

EGERTON.—"I have spoken."

HARLEY, (with interest.)—"And well, I hope?"

EGERTON.—"With effect, I suppose, for I have been loudly cheered, which does not always happen to me."

HARLEY.—"And that gave you pleasure?"

EGERTON, (after a moment's thought.)—"No, not the least."

HARLEY.—"What, then, attaches you so much to this life—constant drudgery, constant warfare—the more pleasurable faculties dormant, all the harsher ones aroused, if even its rewards (and I take the best of those to be applause) do not please you?"

EGERTON.—"What? Custom."

HARLEY.—"Martyr!"

EGERTON.—"You say it. But turn to yourself: you have decided, then, to leave England next week."

HARLEY, (moodily.)—"Yes. This life in a capital, where all are so active, myself so objectless, preys on me like a low fever. Nothing here amuses me, nothing interests, nothing comforts and consoles. But I am resolved, before it be too late, to make one great struggle out of the Past, and into the natural world of men. In a word, I have resolved to marry."

EGERTON.—"Whom?"

HARLEY, (seriously.)—Upon my life, my dear fellow, you are a great philosopher. You have hit the exact question. You see I cannot marry a dream; and where, out of dreams, shall I find this 'whom?'"

EGERTON.—"You do not search for her."

HARLEY.—"Do we ever search for love? Does it not flash upon us when we least expect it? Is it not like the inspiration to the muse? What poet sits down and says, 'I will write a poem?' What man looks out and says, 'I will fall in love?' No! Happiness, as the great German tells us, 'falls suddenly from the bosom of the gods;' so does love."

EGERTON.—"You remember the old line in Horace: 'The tide flows away, while the boor sits on the margin and waits for the ford.'"

HARLEY.—"An idea which incidentally dropped from you some weeks ago, and which I had before half-meditated, has since haunted me. If I could but find some child with sweet dispositions and fair intellect not yet formed, and train her up, according to my ideal. I am still young enough to wait a few years. And meanwhile I shall have gained what I so sadly want—an object in life."

EGERTON.—"You are ever the child of romance. But what"—

Here the minister was interrupted by a messenger from the House of Commons, whom Audley had instructed to seek him on the bridge should his presence be required—"Sir, the Opposition are taking advantage of the thinness of the House to call for a division. Mr —— is put up to speak for time, but they won't hear him."

Egerton turned hastily to Lord L'Estrange—"You see you must excuse me now. To-morrow I must go to Windsor for two days; but we shall meet on my return."

"It does not matter," answered Harley; "I stand out of the pale of your advice, O practical man of sense. And if," added Harley, with affectionate and mournful sweetness—"if I weary you with complaints which you cannot understand, it is only because of old schoolboy habits. I can have no trouble that I do not confide in you."

Egerton's hand trembled as it pressed his friend's; and, with-

out a word, he hurried away abruptly. Harley remained motionless for some seconds, in deep and quiet reverie; then he called to his dog, and turned back towards Westminster.

He passed the nook in which had sate the still figure of Despondency. But the figure had now risen, and was leaning against the balustrade. The dog, who preceded his master, paused by the solitary form, and sniffed it suspiciously.

"Nero, sir, come here," said Harley.

"Nero," that was the name by which Helen had said that her father's friend had called his dog. And the sound startled Leonard as he leant, sick at heart, against the stone. He lifted his head and looked wistfully, eagerly, into Harley's face. Those eyes, bright, clear, yet so strangely deep and absent, which Helen had described, met his own, and chained them. For L'Estrange halted also; the boy's countenance was not unfamiliar to him. He returned the inquiring look fixed on his own, and recognised the student by the book-stall.

"The dog is quite harmless, sir," said L'Estrange, with a smile.

"And you call him 'Nero?'" said Leonard, still gazing on the stranger.

Harley mistook the drift of the question.

"Nero, sir; but he is free from the sanguinary propensities of his Roman namesake." Harley was about to pass on, when Leonard said falteringly,—

"Pardon me, but can it be possible that you are one whom I have sought in vain, on behalf of the child of Captain Digby?"

Harley stopped short. "Digby!" he exclaimed, "where is he? He should have found me easily. I gave him an address."

"Ah, Heaven be thanked!" cried Leonard. "Helen is saved —she will not die," and he burst into tears.

A very few moments, and a very few words sufficed to explain to Harley the state of his old fellow-soldier's orphan. And Harley himself soon stood in the young sufferer's room, supporting her burning temples on his breast, and whispering into ears that heard him as in a happy dream, "Comfort, comfort; your father yet lives in me."

And then Helen, raising her eyes, said, "But Leonard is my brother—more than brother—and he needs a father's care more than I do."

"Hush, hush, Helen. I need no one—nothing now!" cried Leonard, and his tears gushed over the little hand that clasped his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HARLEY L'ESTRANGE was a man whom all things that belong to the romantic and poetic side of our human life deeply impressed. When he came to learn the ties between these two Children of Nature, standing side by side, alone amidst the storms of fate, his heart was more deeply moved than it had been for many years. In those dreary attics, overshadowed by the smoke and reek of the humble suburb—the workday world in its harshest and tritest forms below and around them—he recognised that divine poem which comes out from all union between the mind and the heart. Here, on the rough deal table, (the ink scarcely dry,) lay the writings of the young wrestler for fame and bread; there, on the other side the partition, on that mean pallet, lay the boy's sole comforter—the all that warmed his heart with living mortal affection. On one side the wall, the world of imagination; on the other, this world of grief and of love. And in both, a spirit equally sublime—unselfish Devotion—"the something afar from the sphere of our sorrow."

He looked round the room into which he had followed Leonard, on quitting Helen's bedside. He noted the MSS. on the table, and, pointing to them, said gently, "And these are the labours by which you supported the soldier's orphan?—soldier yourself in a hard battle!"

"The battle was lost—I could not support her," replied Leonard mournfully.

"But you did not desert her. When Pandora's box was opened, they say Hope lingered last——"

"False, false," said Leonard; "a heathen's notion. There are deities that linger behind Hope—Gratitude, Love, and Duty."

"Yours is no common nature," exclaimed Harley admiringly, "but I must sound it more deeply hereafter: at present I hasten for the physician; I shall return with him. We must move that poor child from this low close air as soon as possible. Meanwhile, let me qualify your rejection of the old fable. Wherever Gratitude, Love, and Duty, remain to man, believe me that Hope is there too, though she may be often invisible, hidden behind the sheltering wings of the nobler deities."

Harley said this with that wondrous smile of his, which cast a brightness over the whole room—and went away.

Leonard stole softly towards the grimy window; and looking up towards the stars that shone pale over the roof-tops, he murmured, "O thou, the All-seeing and All-merciful!—how it comforts me now to think that though my dreams of knowledge may have sometimes obscured the Heaven, I never doubted that Thou wert there!—as luminous and everlasting, though behind the cloud!" So, for a few minutes, he prayed silently—then passed into Helen's room, and sate beside her motionless, for she slept. She woke just as Harley returned with a physician; and then Leonard, returning to his own room, saw amongst his papers the letter he had written to Mr Dale, and muttering, "I need not disgrace my calling—I need not be the mendicant now"—held the letter to the flame of the candle. And while he said this, and as the burning tinder dropped on the floor, the sharp hunger, unfelt during his late anxious emotions, gnawed at his entrails. Still, even hunger could not reach that noble pride which had yielded to a sentiment nobler than itself—and he smiled as he repeated, "No mendicant!—the life that I was sworn to guard is saved. I can raise against Fate the front of Man once more."

CHAPTER XIX.

A FEW days afterwards, and Helen, removed to a pure air, and under the advice of the first physicians, was out of all danger.

It was a pretty detached cottage, with its windows looking over the wild heaths of Norwood, to which Harley rode daily to watch the convalescence of his young charge ;—an object in life was already found. As she grew better and stronger, he coaxed her easily into talking, and listened to her with pleased surprise. The heart so infantine, and the sense so womanly, struck him much by its rare contrast and combination. Leonard, whom he had insisted on placing also in the cottage, had stayed there willingly till Helen's recovery was beyond question. Then he came to Lord L'Estrange, as the latter was about one day to leave the cottage, and said quietly, "Now, my Lord, that Helen is safe, and now that she will need me no more, I can no longer be a pensioner on your bounty. I return to London."

"You are my visitor, not my pensioner, foolish boy," said Harley, who had already noticed the pride which spoke in that farewell ; "come into the garden, and let us talk."

Harley seated himself on a bench on the little lawn ; Nero crouched at his feet ; Leonard stood beside him.

"So," said Lord L'Estrange, "you would return to London ? What to do ?"

"Fulfil my fate."

"And that ?"

"I cannot guess. Fate is the Isis whose veil no mortal can ever raise."

"You should be born for great things," said Harley abruptly. "I am sure that you write well. I have seen that you study

with passion. Better than writing and better than study, you have a noble heart, and the proud desire of independence. Let me see your MSS., or any copies of what you have already printed. Do not hesitate—I ask but to be a reader. I don't pretend to be a patron : it is a word I hate."

Leonard's eyes sparkled through their sudden moisture. He brought out his portfolio, placed it on the bench beside Harley, and then went softly to the further part of the garden. Nero looked after him, and then rose and followed him slowly. The boy seated himself on the turf, and Nero rested his dull head on the loud heart of the poet.

Harley took up the various papers before him, and read them through leisurely. Certainly he was no critic. He was not accustomed to analyse what pleased or displeased him ; but his perceptions were quick, and his taste exquisite. As he read, his countenance, always so genuinely expressive, exhibited now doubt and now admiration. He was soon struck by the contrast, in the boy's writings, between the pieces that sported with fancy, and those that grappled with thought. In the first, the young poet seemed so unconscious of his own individuality. His imagination, afar and aloft from the scenes of his suffering, ran riot amidst a paradise of happy golden creations. But in the last, the THINKER stood out alone and mournful, questioning, in troubled sorrow, the hard world on which he gazed. All in the thought was unsettled, tumultuous ; all in the fancy serene and peaceful. The genius seemed divided into twain shapes ; the one bathing its wings amidst the starry dews of heaven ; the other wandering "melancholy, slow," amidst desolate and boundless sands. Harley gently laid down the paper and mused a little while. Then he rose and walked to Leonard, gazing on his countenance as he neared the boy, with a new and a deeper interest.

"I have read your papers," he said, "and recognise in them two men, belonging to two worlds, essentially distinct."

Leonard started, and murmured, "True, true!"

"I apprehend," resumed Harley, "that one of these men must either destroy the other, or that the two must become fused and harmonised into a single existence. Get your hat,

mount my groom's horse, and come with me to London; we will converse by the way. Look you, I believe you and I agree in this, that the first object of every nobler spirit is independence. It is towards this independence that I alone presume to assist you; and this is a service which the proudest man can receive without a blush."

Leonard lifted his eyes towards Harley's, and those eyes swam with grateful tears; but his heart was too full to answer.

"I am not one of those," said Harley, when they were on the road, "who think that because a young man writes poetry he is fit for nothing else, and that he must be a poet or a pauper. I have said that in you there seem to me to be two men, the man of the Actual world, the man of the Ideal. To each of these men I can offer a separate career. The first is perhaps the more tempting. It is the interest of the state to draw into its service all the talent and industry it can obtain; and under his native state every citizen of a free country should be proud to take service. I have a friend who is a minister, and who is known to encourage talent—Audley Egerton. I have but to say to him, 'There is a young man who will well repay to the government whatever the government bestows on him;' and you will rise to-morrow independent in means, and with fair occasions to attain to fortune and distinction. This is one offer—what say you to it?"

Leonard thought bitterly of his interview with Audley Egerton, and the minister's proffered crown-piece. He shook his head, and replied—

"Oh, my Lord, how have I deserved such kindness? Do with me what you will; but if I have the option, I would rather follow my own calling. This is not the ambition that inflames me."

"Hear, then, the other offer. I have a friend with whom I am less intimate than Egerton, and who has nothing in his gift to bestow. I speak of a man of letters—Henry Norreys—of whom you have doubtless heard, who, I should say, conceived an interest in you when he observed you reading at the book-stall. I have often heard him say, 'that literature as a profession is misunderstood, and that rightly followed, with the same pains

and the same prudence which are brought to bear on other professions, a competence at least can be always ultimately obtained.' But the way may be long and tedious—and it leads to no power but over thought; it rarely attains to wealth; and, though *reputation* may be certain, *Fame*, such as poets dream of, is the lot of few. What say you to this course?"

"My Lord, I decide," said Leonard firmly; and then, his young face lighting up with enthusiasm, he exclaimed, "Yes, if, as you say, there be two men within me, I feel that were I condemned wholly to the mechanical and practical world, one would indeed destroy the other. And the conqueror would be the ruder and the coarser. Let me pursue those ideas that, though they have but flitted across me, vague and formless—have ever soared towards the sunlight. No matter whether or not they lead to fortune or to fame, at least they will lead me upward! Knowledge for itself I desire—what care I, if it be not power!"

"Enough," said Harley, with a pleased smile at his young companion's outburst. "As you decide so shall it be settled. And now permit me, if not impertinent, to ask you a few questions. Your name is Leonard Fairfield?"

The boy blushed deeply, and bowed his head as if in assent.

"Helen says you are self-taught; for the rest she refers me to you—thinking, perhaps, that I should esteem you less—rather than yet more highly—if she said you were, as I presume to conjecture, of humble birth."

"My birth," said Leonard, slowly, "is very—very—humble."

"The name of Fairfield is not unknown to me. There was one of that name who married into a family in Lansmere—married an Avenel," continued Harley, and his voice quivered. "You change countenance. Oh, could your mother's name have been Avenel?"

"Yes," said Leonard, between his set teeth. Harley laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Then, indeed, I have a claim on you—then, indeed, we are friends. I have a right to serve any of that family."

Leonard looked at him in surprise—"For," continued Harley, recovering himself, "they always served my family; and my

recollections of Lansmere, though boyish, are indelible." He spurred on his horse as the words closed—and again there was a long pause; but from that time Harley always spoke to Leonard in a soft voice, and often gazed on him with earnest and kindly eyes.

They reached a house in a central, though not fashionable street. A man-servant of a singularly grave and awful aspect opened the door—a man who had lived all his life with authors. Poor fellow, he was indeed prematurely old! The care on his lip and the pomp on his brow—no mortal's pen can describe!

"Is Mr Norreys at home?" asked Harley.

"He is at home—to his friends, my Lord," answered the man majestically; and he stalked across the hall with the step of a Dangeau ushering some Montmorenci into the presence of *Louis le Grand.*

"Stay—show this gentleman into another room. I will go first into the library; wait for me, Leonard." The man nodded, and conducted Leonard into the dining-room. Then pausing before the door of the library, and listening an instant, as if fearful to disturb some mood of inspiration, opened it very softly. To his ineffable disgust, Harley pushed before, and entered abruptly. It was a large room, lined with books from the floor to the ceiling. Books were on all the tables—books were on all the chairs. Harley seated himself on a folio of Raleigh's History of the World, and cried—

"I have brought you a treasure!"

"What is it?" said Norreys, good-humouredly, looking up from his desk.

"A mind!"

"A mind!" echoed Norreys, vaguely. "Your own?"

"Pooh—I have none—I have only a heart and a fancy. Listen. You remember the boy we saw reading at the book-stall. I have caught him for you, and you shall train him into a man. I have the warmest interest in his future—for I knew some of his family—and one of that family was very dear to me. As for money, he has not a shilling, and not a shilling would he accept gratis from you or me either. But he comes with bold heart to work—and work you must find him." Harley then rapidly

told his friend of the two offers he had made to Leonard—and Leonard's choice.

"This promises very well; for letters a man must have a strong vocation as he should have for law—I will do all that you wish."

Harley rose with alertness—shook Norreys cordially by the hand—hurried out of the room, and returned with Leonard.

Mr Norreys eyed the young man with attention. He was naturally rather severe than cordial in his manner to strangers—contrasting in this, as in most things, the poor vagabond Burley. But he was a good judge of the human countenance, and he liked Leonard's. After a pause he held out his hand.

"Sir," said he, "Lord L'Estrange tells me that you wish to enter literature as a calling, and no doubt to study it as an art. I may help you in this, and you meanwhile can help me. I want an amanuensis—I offer you that place. The salary will be proportioned to the services you will render me. I have a room in my house at your disposal. When I first came up to London, I made the same choice that I hear you have done. I have no cause, even in a worldly point of view, to repent my choice. It gave me an income larger than my wants. I trace my success to these maxims, which are applicable to all professions—1st, Never to trust to genius for what can be obtained by labour; 2dly, Never to profess to teach what we have not studied to understand; 3dly, Never to engage our word to what we do not do our best to execute. With these rules, literature—provided a man does not mistake his vocation for it, and will, under good advice, go through the preliminary discipline of natural powers, which all vocations require—is as good a calling as any other. Without them a shoeblack's is infinitely better."

"Possibly enough," muttered Harley; "but there have been great writers who observed none of your maxims."

"Great writers, probably, but very unenviable men. My Lord, my Lord, don't corrupt the pupil you bring to me." Harley smiled and took his departure, and left Genius at school with Common Sense and Experience.

CHAPTER XX.

WHILE Leonard Fairfield had been obscurely wrestling against poverty, neglect, hunger, and dread temptation, bright had been the opening day, and smooth the upward path, of Randal Leslie. Certainly no young man, able and ambitious, could enter life under fairer auspices; the connection and avowed favourite of a popular and energetic statesman, the brilliant writer of a political work, that had lifted him at once into a station of his own —received and courted in those highest circles, to which neither rank nor fortune alone suffices for a familiar passport—the circles above fashion itself—the circles of POWER—with every facility of augmenting information, and learning the world betimes through the talk of its acknowledged masters,—Randal had but to move straight onward, and success was sure. But his tortuous spirit delighted in scheme and intrigue for their own sake. In scheme and intrigue he saw shorter paths to fortune, if not to fame. His besetting sin was also his besetting weakness. He did not aspire—he *coveted*. Though in a far higher social position than Frank Hazeldean, despite the worldly prospects of his old schoolfellow, he coveted the very things that kept Frank Hazeldean below him—coveted his idle gaieties, his careless pleasures, his very waste of youth. Thus, also, Randal less aspired to Audley Egerton's repute than he coveted Audley Egerton's wealth and pomp, his princely expenditure, and his Castle Rackrent in Grosvenor Square. It was the misfortune of his birth to be so near to both these fortunes—near to that of Leslie, as the future head of that fallen house,—near even to that of Hazeldean, since, as we have seen before, if the Squire had had no son, Randal's descent from the Hazeldeans suggested

himself as the one on whom these broad lands should devolve. Most young men, brought into intimate contact with Audley Egerton, would have felt for that personage a certain loyal and admiring, if not very affectionate, respect. For there was something grand in Egerton—something that commands and fascinates the young. His determined courage, his energetic will, his almost regal liberality, contrasting a simplicity in personal tastes and habits that was almost austere—his rare and seemingly unconscious power of charming even the women most wearied of homage, and persuading even the men most obdurate to counsel—all served to invest the practical man with those spells which are usually confined to the ideal one. But, indeed, Audley Egerton was an Ideal—the ideal of the Practical. Not the mere vulgar, plodding, red-tape machine of petty business, but the man of strong sense, inspired by inflexible energy, and guided to definite earthly objects. In a dissolute and corrupt form of government, under a decrepit monarchy, or a vitiated republic, Audley Egerton might have been a most dangerous citizen; for his ambition was so resolute, and his sight to its ends was so clear. But there is something in public life in England which compels the really ambitious man to honour, unless his eyes are jaundiced and oblique like Randal Leslie's. It is so necessary in England to be a gentleman. And thus Egerton was emphatically considered a *gentleman*. Without the least pride in other matters, with little apparent sensitiveness, touch him on the point of gentleman, and no one so sensitive and so proud. As Randal saw more of him, and watched his moods with the lynx-eyes of the household spy, he could perceive that this hard mechanical man was subject to fits of melancholy, even of gloom; and though they did not last long, there was even in his habitual coldness an evidence of something comprest, latent, painful, lying deep within his memory. This would have interested the kindly feelings of a grateful heart. But Randal detected and watched it only as a clue to some secret it might profit him to gain. For Randal Leslie hated Egerton; and hated him the more because, with all his book knowledge and his conceit in his own talents, he could not despise his patron—because he had not yet succeeded in making

his patron the mere tool or stepping-stone—because he thought that Egerton's keen eye saw through his wily heart, even while, as if in profound disdain, the minister helped the *protégé*. But this last suspicion was unsound. Egerton had not detected Leslie's corrupt and treacherous nature. He might have other reasons for keeping him at a certain distance, but he inquired too little into Randal's feelings towards himself to question the attachment, or doubt the sincerity, of one who owed to him so much. But that which more than all embittered Randal's feelings towards Egerton, was the careful and deliberate frankness with which the latter had, more than once, repeated and enforced the odious announcement, that Randal had nothing to expect from the minister's—WILL ;—nothing to expect from that wealth which glared in the hungry eyes of the pauper heir to the Leslies of Rood. To whom, then, could Egerton mean to devise his fortune? To whom but Frank Hazeldean. Yet Audley took so little notice of his nephew—seemed so indifferent to him, that that supposition, however natural, seemed exposed to doubt. The astuteness of Randal was perplexed. Meanwhile, however, the less he himself could rely upon Egerton for fortune, the more he revolved the possible chances of ousting Frank from the inheritance of Hazeldean—in part, at least, if not wholly. To one less scheming, crafty, and remorseless than Randal Leslie with every day became more and more, such a project would have seemed the wildest delusion. But there was something fearful in the manner in which this young man sought to turn knowledge into power, and make the study of all weakness in others subservient to his own ends. He wormed himself thoroughly into Frank's confidence. He learned through Frank all the Squire's peculiarities of thought and temper, and thoroughly pondered over each word in the father's letters, which the son gradually got into the habit of showing to the perfidious eyes of his friend. Randal saw that the Squire had two characteristics, which are very common amongst proprietors, and which might be invoked as antagonists to his warm fatherly love. First, the Squire was as fond of his estate as if it were a living thing, and part of his own flesh and blood; and in his lectures to Frank upon the sin of extravagance, the

Squire always let out this foible:—"What was to become of the estate if it fell into the hands of a spendthrift? No man should make ducks and drakes of Hazeldean; let Frank beware of *that*," &c. Secondly, the Squire was not only fond of his lands, but he was jealous of them—that jealousy which even the tenderest fathers sometimes entertain towards their natural heirs. He could not bear the notion that Frank should count on his death; and he seldom closed an admonitory letter without repeating the information that Hazeldean was not entailed; that it was his to do with as he pleased through life and in death. Indirect menace of this nature rather wounded and galled than intimidated Frank; for the young man was extremely generous and high-spirited by nature, and was always more disposed to some indiscretion after such warnings to his self-interest, as if to show that those were the last kinds of appeal likely to influence him. By the help of such insights into the character of father and son, Randal thought he saw gleams of daylight illumining his own chance of the lands of Hazeldean. Meanwhile it appeared to him obvious that, come what might of it, his own interests could not lose, and might most probably gain, by whatever could alienate the Squire from his natural heir. Accordingly, though with consummate tact, he instigated Frank towards the very excesses most calculated to irritate the Squire, all the while appearing rather to give the counter advice, and never sharing in any of the follies to which he conducted his thoughtless friend. In this he worked chiefly through others, introducing Frank to every acquaintance most dangerous to youth, either from the wit that laughs at prudence, or the spurious magnificence that subsists so handsomely upon bills endorsed by friends of "great expectations."

The minister and his *protégé* were seated at breakfast, the first reading the newspaper, the last glancing over his letters; for Randal had arrived to the dignity of receiving many letters—ay, and notes too, three-cornered and fantastically embossed. Egerton uttered an exclamation, and laid down the newspaper. Randal looked up from his correspondence. The minister had sunk into one of his absent reveries.

After a long silence, observing that Egerton did not return to the newspaper, Randal said, "Ehem—sir, I have a note from Frank Hazeldean, who wants much to see me; his father has arrived in town unexpectedly."

"What brings him here?" asked Egerton, still abstractedly.

"Why, it seems that he has heard some vague reports of poor Frank's extravagance, and Frank is rather afraid, or ashamed, to meet him."

"Ay—a very great fault extravagance in the young!—destroys independence; ruins or enslaves the future. Great fault—very! And what does youth want that it should be extravagant? Has it not everything in itself, merely because it *is?* Youth is youth—what needs it more?"

Egerton rose as he said this, and retired to his writing-table, and in his turn opened his correspondence. Randal took up the newspaper, and endeavoured, but in vain, to conjecture what had excited the minister's exclamation, and the reverie that succeeded it.

Egerton suddenly and sharply turned round in his chair—"If you have done with the *Times*, have the goodness to place it here."

Randal had just obeyed, when a knock at the street door was heard, and presently Lord L'Estrange came into the room, with somewhat a quicker step, and somewhat a gayer mien than usual.

Audley's hand, as if mechanically, fell upon the newspaper—fell upon that part of the columns devoted to births, deaths, and marriages. Randal stood by, and noted; then, bowing to L'Estrange, left the room.

"Audley," said L'Estrange, "I have had an adventure since I saw you—an adventure that reopened the Past, and may influence my future."

"How?"

"In the first place I have met with a relation of—of—the Avenels."

"Indeed! Whom—Richard Avenel?"

"Richard—Richard—who is he? Oh, I remember; the wild lad who went off to America; but that was when I was a mere child."

"That Richard Avenel is now a rich thriving trader, and his marriage is in this newspaper—married to an Honourable Mrs M'Catchley. Well—in this country—who should plume himself on birth?"

"You did not say so always, Egerton," replied Harley, with a tone of mournful reproach.

"And I say so now, pertinently to a Mrs M'Catchley, not to the heir of the L'Estranges. But no more of these—these Avenels."

"Yes, more of them. I tell you I have met a relation of theirs—a nephew of—of—"

"Of Richard Avenel's?" interrupted Egerton; and then added in the slow, deliberate, argumentative tone in which he was wont to speak in public, "Richard Avenel the trader! I saw him once—a presuming and intolerable man!"

"The nephew has not those sins. He is full of promise, of modesty, yet of pride. And his countenance—oh, Egerton, he has *her* eyes."

Egerton made no answer, and Harley resumed—

"I had thought of placing him under your care. I knew you would provide for him."

"I will. Bring him hither," cried Egerton eagerly. "All that I can do to prove my—regard for a wish of yours."

Harley pressed his friend's hand warmly.

"I thank you from my heart; the Audley of my boyhood speaks now. But the young man has decided otherwise; and I do not blame him. Nay, I rejoice that he chooses a career in which, if he find hardship, he may escape dependence."

"And that career is—"

"Letters?"

"Letters—Literature!" exclaimed the statesman. "Beggary! No, no, Harley, this is your absurd romance."

"It will not be beggary, and it is not my romance: it is the boy's. Leave him alone, he is my care and my charge henceforth. He is of *her* blood, and I said that he had *her* eyes."

"But you are going abroad; let me know where he is; I will watch over him."

"And unsettle a right ambition for a wrong one? No—you

shall know nothing of him till he can proclaim himself. I think that day will come."

Audley mused a moment, and then said, "Well, perhaps you are right. After all, as you say, independence is a great blessing, and my ambition has not rendered myself the better or the happier.

"Yet, my poor Audley, you ask me to be ambitious."

"I only wish you to be consoled," cried Egerton with passion.

"I will try to be so; and by the help of a milder remedy than yours. I said that my adventure might influence my future; it brought me acquainted not only with the young man I speak of, but the most winning affectionate child—a girl."

"Is this child an Avenel too?"

"No, she is of gentle blood—a soldier's daughter; the daughter of that Captain Digby on whose behalf I was a petitioner to your patronage. He is dead, and in dying, my name was on his lips. He meant me, doubtless, to be the guardian to his orphan. I shall be so. I have at last an object in life."

"But can you seriously mean to take this child with you abroad?"

"Seriously, I do."

"And lodge her in your own house?"

"For a year or so while she is yet a child. Then, as she approaches youth, I shall place her elsewhere."

"You may grow to love her. Is it clear that she will love you?—not mistake gratitude for love? It is a very hazardous experiment."

"So was William the Norman's—still he was William the Conqueror. Thou biddest me move on from the Past, and be consoled, yet thou wouldst make me as inapt to progress as the mule in Slawkenbergius's tale, with thy cursed interlocutions, 'Stumbling, by St Nicholas, every step. Why, at this rate, we shall be all night in getting into—' *Happiness!* Listen," continued Harley, setting off, full pelt, into one of his wild whimsical humours. "One of the sons of the prophets in Israel, felling wood near the River Jordan his hatchet forsook the helve, and fell to the bottom of the river; so he prayed to have it again, (it was but a small request, mark you;) and having a

strong faith, he did not throw the hatchet after the helve, but the helve after the hatchet. Presently two great miracles were seen. Up springs the hatchet from the bottom of the water, and fixes itself to its old acquaintance, the helve. Now, had he wished to coach it to Heaven in a fiery chariot like Elias, be as rich as Job, strong as Samson, and beautiful as Absalom, would he have obtained the wish, do you think? In truth, my friend, I question it very much."

"I cannot comprehend what you mean. Sad stuff you are talking."

"I can't help that; Rabelais is to be blamed for it. I am quoting him, and it is to be found in his Prologue to the Chapters on the Moderation of Wishes. And apropos of 'moderate wishes in point of hatchet,' I want you to understand that I ask but little from Heaven. I fling but the helve after the hatchet that has sunk into the silent stream. I want the other half of the weapon that is buried fathom deep, and for want of which the thick woods darken round me by the Sacred River, and I can catch not a glimpse of the stars."

"In plain English," said Audley Egerton, "you want"—he stopped short, puzzled.

"I want my purpose and my will, and my old character, and the nature God gave me. I want the half of my soul which has fallen from me. I want such love as may replace to me the vanished affections. Reason not—I throw the helve after the hatchet."

CHAPTER XXI.

Randal Leslie, on leaving Audley, repaired to Frank's lodgings, and after being closeted with the young Guardsman an hour or so, took his way to Limmer's hotel, and asked for Mr Hazeldean. He was shown into the coffee-room, while the waiter went up stairs with his card, to see if the Squire was within, and disengaged. The *Times* newspaper lay sprawling on one of the tables, and Randal, leaning over it, looked with attention into the column containing births, deaths, and marriages. But in that long and miscellaneous list, he could not conjecture the name which had so excited Mr Egerton's interest.

"Vexatious!" he muttered; "there is no knowledge which has power more useful than that of the secrets of men."

He turned as the waiter entered, and said that Mr Hazeldean would be glad to see him.

As Randal entered the drawing-room, the Squire, shaking hands with him, looked towards the door as if expecting some one else, and his honest face assumed a blank expression of disappointment when the door closed, and he found that Randal was unaccompanied.

"Well," said he, bluntly, "I thought your old schoolfellow, Frank, might have been with you."

"Have not you seen him yet, sir?"

"No, I came to town this morning; travelled outside the mail; sent to his barracks, but the young gentleman does not sleep there—has an apartment of his own; he never told me that. We are a plain family, the Hazeldeans—young sir; and I hate being kept in the dark, by my own son too."

Randal made no answer, but looked sorrowful. The Squire,

who had never before seen his kinsman, had a vague idea that it was not polite to entertain a stranger, though a connection to himself, with his family troubles, and so resumed good-naturedly.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance at last, Mr Leslie. You know, I hope, that you have good Hazeldean blood in your veins?"

RANDAL, (smiling.)—"I am not likely to forget that; it is the boast of our pedigree."

SQUIRE, (heartily.)—"Shake hands again on it, my boy. You don't want a friend, since my grandee of a half-brother has taken you up; but if ever you should, Hazeldean is not very far from Rood. Can't get on with your father at all, my lad—more's the pity, for I think I could have given him a hint or two as to the improvement of his property. If he would plant those ugly commons—larch and fir soon come into profit, sir; and there are some low lands about Rood that would take mighty kindly to draining."

RANDAL.—"My poor father lives a life so retired, and you cannot wonder at it. Fallen trees lie still, and so do fallen families."

SQUIRE.—"Fallen families can get up again, which fallen trees can't."

RANDAL.—"Ah, sir, it often takes the energy of generations to repair the thriftlessness and extravagance of a single owner."

SQUIRE, (his brow lowering.)—"That's very true. Frank *is* d——d extravagant; treats me very coolly, too—not coming; near three o'clock. By the by, I suppose he told you where I was, otherwise how did you find me out?"

RANDAL, (reluctantly.)—"Sir, he did; and, to speak frankly, I am not surprised that he has not yet appeared."

SQUIRE.—"Eh!"

RANDAL.—"We have grown very intimate."

SQUIRE.—"So he writes me word—and I am glad of it. Our member, Sir John, tells me you are a very clever fellow, and a very steady one. And Frank says that he wishes he had your prudence, if he can't have your talents. He has a good heart, Frank," added the father, relentingly. "But zounds,

sir, you say you are not surprised he has not come to welcome his own father!"

"My dear sir," said Randal, "you wrote word to Frank that you had heard from Sir John and others of his goings-on, and that you were not satisfied with his replies to your letters."

"Well."

"And then you suddenly come up to town."

"Well."

"Well. And Frank is ashamed to meet you. For, as you say, he has been extravagant, and he has exceeded his allowance; and knowing my respect for you, and my great affection for himself, he has asked me to prepare you to receive his confession and forgive him. I know I am taking a great liberty. I have no right to interfere between father and son; but pray—pray think I mean for the best."

"Humph!" said the Squire, recovering himself very slowly, and showing evident pain, "I knew already that Frank had spent more than he ought; but I think he should not have employed a third person to prepare me to forgive him. (Excuse me—no offence.) And if he wanted a third person, was not there his own mother? What the devil!—(firing up)—am I a tyrant—a bashaw—that my own son is afraid to speak to me? Gad, I'll give it him!"

"Pardon me, sir," said Randal, assuming at once that air of authority which superior intellect so well carries off and excuses, "but I strongly advise you not to express any anger at Frank's confidence in me. At present I have influence over him. Whatever you may think of his extravagance, I have saved him from many an indiscretion, and many a debt—a young man will listen to one of his own age so much more readily than even to the kindest friend of graver years. Indeed, sir, I speak for your sake as well as for Frank's. Let me keep this influence over him; and don't reproach him for the confidence he placed in me. Nay, let him rather think that I have softened any displeasure you might otherwise have felt."

There seemed so much good sense in what Randal said, and the kindness of it seemed so disinterested, that the Squire's native shrewdness was deceived.

"You are a fine young fellow," said he, "and I am very much obliged to you. Well, I suppose there is no putting old heads upon young shoulders; and I promise you I'll not say an angry word to Frank. I dare say, poor boy, he is very much afflicted, and I long to shake hands with him. So, set his mind at ease."

"Ah, sir," said Randal, with much apparent emotion, "your son may well love you; and it seems to be a hard matter for so kind a heart as yours to preserve the proper firmness with him."

"Oh, I can be firm enough," quoth the Squire—"especially when I don't see him—handsome dog that he is: very like his mother—don't you think so?"

"I never saw his mother, sir."

"Gad! Not seen my Harry? No more you have; you must come and pay us a visit. I suppose my half-brother will let you come?"

"To be sure, sir. Will you not call on him while you are in town?"

"Not I. He would think I expected to get something from the Government. Tell him the ministers must go on a little better, if they want my vote for their member. But go. I see you are impatient to tell Frank that all's forgot and forgiven. Come and dine with him here at six, and let him bring his bills in his pocket. Oh, I shan't scold him."

"Why, as to that," said Randal, smiling, "I think (forgive me still) that you should not take it too easily; just as I think that you had better not blame him for his very natural and praiseworthy shame in approaching you, so I think, also, that you should do nothing that would tend to diminish that shame—it is such a check on him. And therefore, if you can contrive to affect to be angry with him for his extravagance, it will do good."

"You speak like a book, and I'll try my best."

"If you threaten, for instance, to take him out of the army, and settle him in the country, it would have a very good effect."

"What! would he think it so great a punishment to come home and live with his parents?"

"I don't say that; but he is naturally so fond of London. At his age, and with his large inheritance, *that* is natural."

"Inheritance!" said the Squire, moodily—"inheritance! he is not thinking of that, I trust? Zounds, sir, I have as good a life as his own. Inheritance!—to be sure the Casino property is entailed on him; but, as for the rest, sir, I am no tenant for life. I could leave the Hazeldean lands to my ploughman, if I chose it. Inheritance, indeed!"

"My dear sir, I did not mean to imply that Frank would entertain the unnatural and monstrous idea of calculating on your death; and all we have to do is to get him to sow his wild oats as soon as possible—marry, and settle down into the country. For it would be a thousand pities if his town habits and tastes grew permanent—a bad thing for the Hazeldean property, that! And," added Randal, laughing, "I feel an interest in the old place, since my grandmother comes of the stock. So, just force yourself to seem angry, and grumble a little when you pay the bills."

"Ah, ah, trust me," said the Squire, doggedly, and with a very altered air. "I am much obliged to you for these hints, my young kinsman." And his stout hand trembled a little as he extended it to Randal.

Leaving Limmer's, Randal hastened to Frank's rooms in St James's Street. "My dear fellow," said he, when he entered, "it is very fortunate that I persuaded you to let me break matters to your father. You might well say he was rather passionate; but I have contrived to soothe him. You need not fear that he will not pay your debts."

"I never feared that," said Frank, changing colour; "I only feared his anger. But, indeed, I fear his kindness still more. What a reckless hound I have been! However, it shall be a lesson to me. And my debts once paid, I will turn as economical as yourself."

"Quite right, Frank. And, indeed, I am a little afraid that, when your father knows the total, he may execute a threat that would be very unpleasant to you."

"What's that?"

"Make you sell out, and give up London."

"The devil!" exclaimed Frank, with fervent emphasis; "that would be treating me like a child."

"Why, it *would* make you seem rather ridiculous to your set, which is not a very rural one. And you, who like London so much, and are so much the fashion."

"Don't talk of it," cried Frank, walking to and fro the room in great disorder.

"Perhaps, on the whole, it might be well not to say all you owe, at once. If you named half the sum, your father would let you off with a lecture; and really I tremble at the effect of the total."

"But how shall I pay the other half?"

"Oh, you must save from your allowance; it is a very liberal one; and the tradesmen are not pressing."

"No—but the cursed bill-brokers—"

"Always renew to a young man of your expectations. And if I get into an office, I can always help you, my dear Frank."

"Ah, Randal, I am not so bad as to take advantage of your friendship," said Frank warmly. "But it seems to me mean, after all, and a sort of a lie, indeed, disguising the real state of my affairs. I should not have listened to the idea from any one else. But you are such a sensible, kind, honourable fellow."

"After epithets so flattering, I shrink from the responsibility of advice. But apart from your own interests, I should be glad to save your father the pain he would feel at knowing the whole extent of the scrape you have got into. And if it entailed on you the necessity to lay by—and give up Hazard, and not be security for other men—why it would be the best thing that could happen. Really, too, it seems hard upon Mr Hazeldean, that he should be the only sufferer, and quite just that you should bear half your own burdens."

"So it is, Randal; that did not strike me before. I will take your counsel; and now I will go at once to Limmer's. My dear father! I hope he is looking well?"

"Oh, very. Such a contrast to the sallow Londoners! But I think you had better not go till dinner. He has asked me to meet you at six. I will call for you a little before, and we can go together. This will prevent a great deal of *gêne* and con-

straint. Good-bye till then.—Ha! by the way, I think if I were you, I would not take the matter too seriously and penitentially. You see the best of fathers like to keep their sons under their thumb, as the saying is. And if you want at your age to preserve your independence, and not be hurried off and buried in the country, like a schoolboy in disgrace, a little manliness of bearing would not be amiss. You can think over it."

The dinner at Limmer's went off very differently from what it ought to have done. Randal's words had sunk deep, and rankled sorely in the Squire's mind; and that impression imparted a certain coldness to his manner which belied the hearty, forgiving, generous impulse with which he had come up to London, and which even Randal had not yet altogether whispered away. On the other hand, Frank, embarrassed both by the sense of disingenuousness, and a desire "not to take the thing too seriously," seemed to the Squire ungracious and thankless.

After dinner the Squire began to hum and haw, and Frank to colour up and shrink. Both felt discomposed by the presence of a third person; till, with an art and address worthy of a better cause, Randal himself broke the ice, and so contrived to remove the restraint he had before imposed, that at length each was heartily glad to have matters made clear and brief by his dexterity and tact.

Frank's debts were not, in reality, large; and when he named the half of them—looking down in shame—the Squire, agreeably surprised, was about to express himself with a liberal heartiness that would have opened his son's excellent heart at once to him. But a warning look from Randal checked the impulse; and the Squire thought it right, as he had promised, to affect an anger he did not feel, and let fall the unlucky threat, "that it was all very well once in a way to exceed his allowance; but if Frank did not, in future, show more sense than to be led away by a set of London sharks and coxcombs, he must cut the army, come home, and take to farming."

Frank imprudently exclaimed, "Oh, sir, I have no taste for farming. And after London, at my age, the country would be so horribly dull."

"Aha!" said the Squire, very grimly—and he thrust back into his pocket-book some extra bank-notes which his fingers had itched to add to those he had already counted out. "The country is terribly dull, is it? Money goes there not upon follies and vices, but upon employing honest labourers, and increasing the wealth of the nation. It does not please you to spend money in that way: it is a pity you should ever be plagued with such duties."

"My dear father—"

"Hold your tongue, you puppy. Oh, I dare say, if you were in my shoes, you would cut down the oaks, and mortgage the property—sell it, for what I know—all go on a cast of the dice! Aha, sir—very well, very well—the country is horribly dull, is it? Pray, stay in town."

"My dear Mr Hazeldean," said Randal blandly, and as if with the wish to turn off into a joke what threatened to be serious, "you must not interpret a hasty expression so literally. Why, you would make Frank as bad as Lord A——, who wrote word to his steward to cut down more timber; and when the steward replied, 'There are only three sign-posts left on the whole estate,' wrote back, '*They've* done growing, at all events—down with them!' You ought to know Lord A——, sir; so witty; and—Frank's particular friend."

"Your particular friend, Master Frank? Pretty friends!"—and the Squire buttoned up the pocket, to which he had transferred his note-book, with a determined air.

"But I'm his friend, too," said Randal, kindly; "and I preach to him properly, I can tell you." Then, as if delicately anxious to change the subject, he began to ask questions upon crops, and the experiment of bone manure. He spoke earnestly, and with *gusto*, yet with the deference of one listening to a great practical authority. Randal had spent the afternoon in cramming the subject from agricultural journals and Parliamentary reports; and, like all practised readers, had really learned in a few hours more than many a man, unaccustomed to study, could gain from books in a year. The Squire was surprised and pleased at the young scholar's information and taste for such subjects.

"But, to be sure," quoth he, with an angry look at poor Frank, you have good Hazeldean blood in you, and know a bean from a turnip."

"Why, sir," said Randal, ingenuously, "I am training myself for public life; and what is a public man worth if he do not study the agriculture of his country?"

"Right—what is he worth? Put that question, with my compliments, to my half-brother. What stuff he did talk, the other night, on the malt-tax, to be sure!"

"Mr Egerton has had so many other things to think of, that we must excuse his want of information upon one topic, however important. With his strong sense, he must acquire that information, sooner or later; for he is fond of power; and, sir, —knowledge is power!"

"Very true;—very fine saying," quoth the poor Squire unsuspiciously, as Randal's eye rested on Mr Hazeldean's open face, and then glanced towards Frank, who looked sad and bored.

"Yes," repeated Randal, "knowledge is power;" and he shook his head wisely, as he passed the bottle to his host.

Still, when the Squire, who meant to return to the Hall next morning, took leave of Frank, his heart warmed to his son; and still more for Frank's dejected looks. It was not Randal's policy to push estrangement too far at first, and in his own presence.

"Speak to poor Frank—kindly now, sir—do;" whispered he, observing the Squire's watery eyes, as he moved to the window.

The Squire rejoiced to obey—thrust out his hand to his son —"My dear boy," said he, "there, don't fret—pshaw!—it was but a trifle after all. Think no more of it."

Frank took the hand, and suddenly threw his arm round his father's broad shoulder.

"Oh, sir, you are too good—too good." His voice trembled so, that Randal took alarm, passed by him, and touched him meaningly.

The Squire pressed his son to his heart—heart so large, that it seemed to fill the whole width under his broadcloth.

"My dear Frank," said he, half blubbering, "it is not the money; but, you see, it so vexes your poor mother; you must be careful in future; and zounds, boy, it will be all yours one

day ; only don't calculate on it ; I could not bear *that*—I could not, indeed."

"Calculate!" cried Frank. Oh, sir, can you think it?"

"I am so delighted that I had some slight hand in your complete reconciliation with Mr Hazeldean," said Randal, as the young men walked from the hotel. "I saw that you were disheartened, and I told him to speak to you kindly."

"Did you? Ah—I am sorry he needed telling."

"I know his character so well already," said Randal, "that I flatter myself I can always keep things between you as they ought to be. What an excellent man!"

"The best man in the world," cried Frank heartily ; and then, as his accents drooped, "yet I have deceived him. I have a great mind to go back—"

"And tell him to give you twice as much money as you had asked for. He would think you had only seemed so affectionate in order to take him in. No, no, Frank—save—lay by—economise ; and then tell him that you have paid half your own debts. Something high-minded in that."

"So there is. Your heart is as good as your head. Good-night."

"Are you going home so early? Have you no engagements?"

"None that I shall keep."

"Good-night, then."

They parted, and Randal walked into one of the fashionable clubs. He neared a table, where three or four young men (younger sons, who lived in the most splendid style, heaven knew how) were still over their wine.

Leslie had little in common with these gentlemen ; but he forced his nature to be agreeable to them, in consequence of a very excellent piece of worldly advice given to him by Audley Egerton. "Never let the dandies call you a prig," said the statesman. "Many a clever fellow fails through life, because the silly fellows, whom half a word well spoken could make his *claqueurs*, turn him into ridicule. Whatever you are, avoid the fault of most reading men : in a word, don't be a prig!"

"I have just left Hazeldean," said Randal. "What a good fellow he is!"

"Capital!" said the honourable George Borrowell. "Where is he?"

"Why, he is gone to his rooms. He has had a little scene with his father, a thorough, rough country squire. It would be an act of charity if you would go and keep him company, or take him with you to some place a little more lively than his own lodgings."

"What! the old gentleman has been teasing him?—a horrid shame! Why, Frank is not extravagant, and he will be very rich—eh?"

"An immense property," said Randal, "and not a mortgage on it: an only son," he added, turning away.

Among these young gentlemen there was a kindly and most benevolent whisper, and presently they all rose, and walked away towards Frank's lodgings.

"The wedge is in the tree," said Randal to himself, "and there is a gap already between the bark and the wood."

CHAPTER XXII.

HARLEY L'ESTRANGE is seated beside Helen at the lattice-window in the cottage at Norwood. The bloom of reviving health is on the child's face, and she is listening with a smile, for Harley is speaking of Leonard with praise, and of Leonard's future with hope. "And thus," he continued, "secure from his former trials, happy in his occupation, and pursuing the career he has chosen, we must be content, my dear child, to leave him."

"Leave him!" exclaimed Helen, and the rose on her cheek faded.

Harley was not displeased to see her emotion. He would have been disappointed in her heart if it had been less susceptible to affection.

"It is hard on you, Helen," said he, "to be separated from one who has been to you as a brother. Do not hate me for doing so. But I consider myself your guardian, and your home as yet must be mine. We are going from this land of cloud and mist, going as into the world of summer. Well, that does not content you. You weep, my child; you mourn your own friend, but do not forget your father's. I am alone, and often sad, Helen; will you not comfort me? You press my hand, but you must learn to smile on me also. You are born to be the Comforter. Comforters are not egotists: they are always cheerful when they console."

The voice of Harley was so sweet, and his words went so home to the child's heart, that she looked up and smiled in his face as he kissed her ingenuous brow. But then she thought of Leo-

nard, and felt so solitary—so bereft—that tears burst forth again. Before these were dried, Leonard himself entered, and, obeying an irresistible impulse, she sprang to his arms, and, leaning her head on his shoulder, sobbed out, "I am going from you, brother—do not grieve—do not miss me."

Harley was much moved: he folded his arms, and contemplated them both silently—and his own eyes were moist. "This heart," thought he, "will be worth the winning!"

He drew aside Leonard, and whispered, "Soothe, but encourage and support her. I leave you together; come to me in the garden later."

It was nearly an hour before Leonard joined Harley.

"She was not weeping when you left her?" asked L'Estrange.

"No; she has more fortitude than we might suppose. Heaven knows how that fortitude has supported mine. I have promised to write to her often."

Harley took two strides across the lawn, and then, coming back to Leonard, said, "Keep your promise, and write often for the first year. I would then ask you to let the correspondence drop gradually."

"Drop!—Ah! my lord!"

"Look you, my young friend, I wish to lead this fair mind wholly from the sorrows of the Past. I wish Helen to enter, not abruptly, but step by step, into a new life. You love each other now, as do two children—as brother and sister. But later, if encouraged, would the love be the same? And is it not better for both of you, that youth should open upon the world with youth's natural affections free and unforestalled?"

"True! And she is so above me," said Leonard mournfully.

"No one is above him who succeeds in your ambition, Leonard. It is not *that*, believe me."

Leonard shook his head.

"Perhaps," said Harley, with a smile, "I rather feel that you are above me. For what vantage-ground is so high as youth? Perhaps I may become jealous of you. It is well that she should learn to like one who is to be henceforth her guardian and protector. Yet, how can she like me as she ought, if her heart is to be full of you?"

The boy bowed his head; and Harley hastened to change the subject, and speak of letters and of glory. His words were eloquent, and his voice kindling; for he had been an enthusiast for fame in his boyhood; and in Leonard's, his own seemed to him to revive. But the poet's heart gave back no echo — suddenly it seemed void and desolate. Yet when Leonard walked back by the moonlight, he muttered to himself, "Strange — strange—so mere a child;—this cannot be love! Still what else to love is there left to me?"

And so he paused upon the bridge where he had so often stood with Helen, and on which he had found the protector that had given to her a home—to himself a career. And life seemed very long, and fame but a dreary phantom. Courage, still, Leonard! These are the sorrows of the heart that teach thee more than all the precepts of sage and critic.

Another day, and Helen had left the shores of England, with her fanciful and dreaming guardian. Years will pass before our tale reopens. Life in all the forms we have seen it travels on. And the Squire farms and hunts; and the Parson preaches and chides and soothes. And Riccabocca reads his Machiavel, and sighs and smiles as he moralises on Men and States. And Violante's dark eyes grow deeper and more spiritual in their lustre; and her beauty takes thought from solitary dreams. And Mr Richard Avenel has his house in London, and the Honourable Mrs Avenel her opera-box; and hard and dire is their struggle into fashion, and hotly does the new man, scorning the aristocracy, pant to become aristocrat. And Audley Egerton goes from the office to the Parliament, and drudges, and debates, and helps to govern the empire in which the sun never sets. Poor Sun, how tired he must be — but not more tired than the Government! And Randal Leslie has an excellent place in the bureau of a minister, and is looking to the time when he shall resign it to come into Parliament, and on that large arena turn knowledge into power. And meanwhile, he is much where he was with Audley Egerton; but he has established intimacy with the Squire, and visited Hazeldean twice, and examined the house and the map of the property—and very nearly fallen a second time into the Ha-ha, and the Squire believes that

Randal Leslie alone can keep Frank out of mischief, and has spoken rough words to his Harry about Frank's continued extravagance. And Frank does continue to pursue pleasure, and is very miserable, and horribly in debt. And Madame di Negra has gone from London to Paris, and taken a tour into Switzerland, and come back to London again, and has grown very intimate with Randal Leslie; and Randal has introduced Frank to her; and Frank thinks her the loveliest woman in the world, and grossly slandered by certain evil tongues. And the brother of Madame di Negra is expected in England at last; and what with his repute for beauty and for wealth, people anticipate a sensation. And Leonard, and Harley, and Helen? Patience—they will all reappear.

BOOK EIGHTH

BOOK EIGHTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

THE ABUSE OF INTELLECT.

THERE is at present so vehement a flourish of trumpets, and so prodigious a roll of the drum, whenever we are called upon to throw up our hats, and cry, "Huzza" to the "March of Enlightenment," that, out of that very spirit of contradiction natural to all rational animals, one is tempted to stop one's ears, and say, "Gently, gently; LIGHT is noiseless; how comes 'Enlightenment' to make such a clatter? Meanwhile, if it be not impertinent, pray, where is Enlightenment marching to?" Ask that question of any six of the loudest bawlers in the procession, and I'll wager tenpence to California that you get six very unsatisfactory answers. One respectable gentleman, who, to our great astonishment, insists upon calling himself "a slave," but has a remarkably free way of expressing his opinions, will reply—"Enlightenment is marching towards the seven points of the Charter." Another, with his hair *à la jeune France*, who has taken a fancy to his friend's wife, and is rather embarrassed with his own, asserts that Enlightenment is proceeding towards the Rights of Women, the reign of Social Love, and the annihilation of Tyrannical Prejudice. A third, who

has the air of a man well to do in the middle class, more modest in his hopes, because he neither wishes to have his head broken by his errand-boy, nor his wife carried off to an Agapemoné by his apprentice, does not take Enlightenment a step farther than a siege on Debrett, and a cannonade on the Budget. Illiberal man! the march that he swells will soon trample *him* under foot. No one fares so ill in a crowd as the man who is wedged in the middle. A fourth, looking wild and dreamy, as if he had come out of the cave of Trophonius, and who is a mesmeriser and a mystic, thinks Enlightenment is in full career towards the good old days of alchemists and necromancers. A fifth, whom one might take for a Quaker, asserts that the march of Enlightenment is a crusade for universal philanthropy, vegetable diet, and the perpetuation of peace, by means of speeches, which certainly do produce a very contrary effect from the Philippics of Demosthenes! The sixth—(good fellow, without a rag on his back)—does not care a straw where the march goes. He can't be worse off than he is; and it is quite immaterial to him whether he goes to the dog-star above, or the bottomless pit below. I say nothing, however, against the march, while we take it altogether. Whatever happens, one is in good company; and though I am somewhat indolent by nature, and would rather stay at home with Locke and Burke, (dull dogs though they were,) than have my thoughts set off helter-skelter with those cursed trumpets and drums, blown and dub-a-dubbed by fellows that I vow to heaven I would not trust with a five-pound note—still, if I must march, I must; and so deuce take the hindmost. But when it comes to individual marchers upon their own account—privateers and condottieri of Enlightenment—who have filled their pockets with lucifer-matches, and have a sublime contempt for their neighbours' barns and hayricks, I don't see why I should throw myself into the seventh heaven of admiration and ecstasy.

If those who are eternally rhapsodising on the celestial blessings that are to follow Enlightenment, Universal Knowledge, and so forth, would just take their eyes out of their pockets, and look about them, I would respectfully inquire if they have never met any very knowing and enlightened gentleman, whose

acquaintance is by no means desirable. If not, they are monstrous lucky. Every man must judge by his own experience; and the worst rogues I have ever encountered were amazingly well-informed, clever fellows! From dunderheads and dunces we can protect ourselves; but from your sharp-witted gentleman, all enlightenment, and no prejudice, we have but to cry, "Heaven defend us!" It is true, that the rogue (let him be ever so enlightened) usually comes to no good himself, (though not before he has done harm enough to his neighbours.) But that only shows that the world wants something else in those it rewards, besides intelligence *per se* and in the abstract; and is much too old a world to allow any Jack Horner to pick out its plums for his own personal gratification. Hence a man of very moderate intelligence, who believes in God, suffers his heart to beat with human sympathies, and keeps his eyes off your strong-box, will perhaps gain a vast deal more power than knowledge ever gives to a rogue.

Wherefore, though I anticipate an outcry against me on the part of the blockheads, who, strange to say, are the most credulous idolaters of enlightenment, and, if knowledge were power, would rot on a dunghill; yet, nevertheless, I think all really enlightened men will agree with me, that when one falls in with detached sharpshooters from the general March of Enlightenment, it is no reason that we should make ourselves a target, because Enlightenment has furnished them with a gun. It has, doubtless, been already remarked by the judicious reader, that of the numerous characters introduced into this work, the larger portion belong to that species which we call the INTELLECTUAL—that through them are analysed and developed human intellect, in various forms and directions. So that this History, rightly considered, is a kind of humble familiar Epic, or, if you prefer it, a long Serio-Comedy, upon the Varieties of English Life in this our Century, set in movement by the intelligences most prevalent. And where more ordinary and less refined types of the species round and complete the survey of our passing generation, they will often suggest, by contrast, the deficiencies which mere intellectual culture leaves in the human being. Certainly, I have no spite against intellect

and enlightenment. Heaven forbid I should be such a Goth. I am only the advocate for common sense and fair play. I don't think an able man necessarily an angel; but I think if his heart match his head, and both proceed in the Great March under a divine Oriflamme, he goes as near to the angel as humanity will permit: if not, if he has but a penn'orth of heart to a pound of brains, I say, "*Bon jour, mon ange!* I see not the starry upward wings, but the grovelling cloven-hoof." I'd rather be offuscated by the Squire of Hazeldean, than enlightened by Randal Leslie. Every man to his taste. But intellect itself (not in the philosophical, but the ordinary sense of the term) is rarely, if ever, one completed harmonious agency; it is not one faculty, but a compound of many, some of which are often at war with each other, and mar the concord of the whole. Few of us but have some predominant faculty, in itself a strength; but which, usurping unseasonably dominion over the rest, shares the lot of all tyranny, however brilliant, and leaves the empire weak against disaffection within, and invasion from without. Hence intellect may be perverted in a man of evil disposition, and sometimes merely wasted in a man of excellent impulses, for want of the necessary discipline, or of a strong ruling motive. I doubt if there be one person in the world, who has obtained a high reputation for talent, who has not met somebody much cleverer than himself, which said somebody has never obtained any reputation at all! Men like Audley Egerton are constantly seen in the great positions of life; while men like Harley L'Estrange, who could have beaten them hollow in anything equally striven for by both, float away down the stream, and, unless some sudden stimulant arouse their dreamy energies, vanish out of sight into silent graves. If Hamlet and Polonius were living now, Polonius would have a much better chance of being a Cabinet Minister, though Hamlet would unquestionably be a much more intellectual character. What would become of Hamlet? Heaven knows! Dr Arnold said, from his experience of a school, that the difference between one man and another was not mere ability—it was energy. There is a great deal of truth in that saying.

Submitting these hints to the judgment and penetration of

the sagacious, I enter on the fresh division of this work, and see already Randal Leslie gnawing his lip on the back-ground. The German poet observes, that the Cow of Isis is to some the divine symbol of knowledge, to others but the milch cow, only regarded for the pounds of butter she will yield. O tendency of our age, to look on Isis as the milch cow! O prostitution of the grandest desires to the basest uses! Gaze on the goddess, Randal Leslie, and get ready thy churn and thy scales. Let us see what the butter will fetch in the market.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW Reign has commenced. There has been a general election; the unpopularity of the Administration has been apparent at the hustings. Audley Egerton, hitherto returned by vast majorities, has barely escaped defeat—thanks to a majority of five. The expenses of his election are said to have been prodigious. 'But who can stand against such wealth as Egerton's—no doubt backed, too, by the Treasury purse?" said the defeated candidate. It is towards the close of October; London is already full; Parliament will meet in less than a fortnight.

In one of the principal apartments of that hotel in which foreigners may discover what is meant by English comfort, and the price which foreigners must pay for it, there sat two persons, side by side, engaged in close conversation. The one was a female, in whose pale clear complexion and raven hair—in whose eyes, vivid with a power of expression rarely bestowed on the beauties of the north, we recognise Beatrice, Marchesa di Negra. Undeniably handsome as was the Italian lady, her companion, though a man, and far advanced into middle age, was yet more remarkable for personal advantages. There was a strong family likeness between the two; but there was also a striking contrast in air, manner, and all that stamps on the physiognomy the idiosyncrasies of character. There was something of gravity, of earnestness and passion, in Beatrice's countenance when carefully examined; her smile at times might be false, but it was rarely ironical, never cynical. Her gestures, though graceful, were unrestrained and frequent. You could see she was a daughter of the south. Her companion, on the contrary, preserved on the fair smooth face, to which years had

given scarcely a line or wrinkle, something that might have passed, at first glance, for the levity and thoughtlessness of a gay and youthful nature; but the smile, though exquisitely polished, took at times the derision of a sneer. In his manners he was as composed and as free from gesture as an Englishman. His hair was of that red brown with which the Italian painters produce such marvellous effects of colour; and, if here and there a silver thread gleamed through the locks, it was lost at once amidst their luxuriance. His eyes were light, and his complexion, though without much colour, was singularly transparent. His beauty, indeed, would have been rather womanly than masculine, but for the height and sinewy spareness of a frame in which muscular strength was rather adorned than concealed by an admirable elegance of proportion. You would never have guessed this man to be an Italian; more likely you would have supposed him a Parisian. He conversed in French, his dress was of French fashion, his mode of thought seemed French. Not that he was like the Frenchman of the present day—an animal, either rude or reserved; but your ideal of the *Marquis* of the old *régime*—the *roué* of the Regency.

Italian, however, he was, and of a race renowned in Italian history. But, as if ashamed of his country and his birth, he affected to be a citizen of the world. Heaven help the world if it hold only such citizens!

"But, Giulio," said Beatrice di Negra, speaking in Italian, "even granting that you discover this girl, can you suppose that her father will ever consent to your alliance? Surely you know too well the nature of your kinsman?"

"*Tu te trompes, ma sœur*," replied Giulio Franzini, Count di Peschiera, in French as usual—"*tu te trompes;* I knew it before he had gone through exile and penury. How can I know it now? But comfort yourself, my too anxious Beatrice, I shall not care for his consent till I've made sure of his daughter's."

"But how win that in despite of the father?"

"*Eh, mordieu!*" interrupted the Count, with true French gaiety; "what would become of all the comedies ever written, if marriages were not made in despite of the father? Look you," he resumed, with a very slight compression of his lip, and

a still slighter movement in his chair—"look you, this is no question of ifs and buts; it is a question of must and shall—a question of existence to you and to me. When Danton was condemned to the guillotine, he said, flinging a pellet of bread at the nose of his respectable judge—'*Mon individu sera bientôt dans le néant*'—*My* patrimony is there already! I am loaded with debts. I see before me, on the one side, ruin or suicide; on the other side, wedlock and wealth."

"But from those vast possessions which you have been permitted to enjoy so long, have you really saved nothing against the time when they might be reclaimed at your hands?"

"My sister," replied the Count, "do I look like a man who saved? Besides, when the Austrian Emperor, unwilling to raze from his Lombard domains a name and a house so illustrious as our kinsman's, and desirous, while punishing that kinsman's rebellion, to reward my adherence, forbore the peremptory confiscation of those vast possessions at which my mouth waters while we speak, but, annexing them to the Crown during pleasure, allowed me, as the next of male kin, to retain the revenues of one-half for the same very indefinite period—had I not every reason to suppose, that, before long, I could so influence his Imperial Majesty or his minister, as to obtain a decree that might transfer the whole, unconditionally and absolutely, to myself? And methinks I should have done so, but for this accursed, intermeddling English Milord, who has never ceased to besiege the court or the minister with alleged extenuations of our cousin's rebellion, and proofless assertions that I shared it in order to entangle my kinsman, and betrayed it in order to profit by his spoils. So that, at last, in return for all my services, and in answer to all my claims, I received from the minister himself this cold reply—'Count of Peschiera, your aid was important, and your reward has been large. That reward, it would not be for your honour to extend, and justify the ill opinion of your Italian countrymen by formally appropriating to yourself all that was forfeited by the treason you denounced. A name so noble as yours should be dearer to you than fortune itself.'"

"Ah, Giulio," cried Beatrice, her face lighting up, changed in its whole character—"those were words that might make

the demon that tempts to avarice fly from your breast in shame."

The Count opened his eyes in great amaze; then he glanced round the room, and said, quietly—

"Nobody else hears you, my dear Beatrice; talk common sense. Heroics sound well in mixed society; but there is nothing less suited to the tone of a family conversation."

Madame di Negra bent down her head abashed, and that sudden change in the expression of her countenance, which had seemed to betray susceptibility to generous emotion, faded as suddenly away.

"But still," she said coldly, "you enjoy one-half of those ample revenues—why talk, then, of suicide and ruin?"

"I enjoy them at the pleasure of the crown; and what if it be the pleasure of the crown to recall our cousin, and reinstate him in his possessions?"

"There is a *probability*, then, of that pardon? When you first employed me in your researches, you only thought there was a *possibility*."

"There is a great probability of it, and therefore I am here. I learned some little time since that the question of such recall had been suggested by the Emperor, and discussed in Council. The danger to the State, which might arise from our cousin's wealth, his alleged abilities—(abilities! bah!)—and his popular name, deferred any decision on the point; and, indeed, the difficulty of dealing with myself must have embarrassed the minister. But it is a mere question of time. He cannot long remain excluded from the general amnesty already extended to the other refugees. The person who gave me this information is high in power, and friendly to myself; and he added a piece of advice, on which I acted. 'It was intimated,' said he, 'by one of the partisans of your kinsman, that the exile could give a hostage for his loyalty in the person of his daughter and heiress; that she had arrived at marriageable age; that if she were to wed, with the Emperor's consent, some one whose attachment to the Austrian crown was unquestionable, there would be a guarantee both for the faith of the father, and for the transmission of so important a heritage to safe and loyal

hands. Why not' (continued my friend) 'apply to the Emperor for his consent to that alliance for yourself?—you, on whom he can depend;—you who, if the daughter should die, would be the legal heir to those lands?' On that hint I spoke."

"You saw the Emperor?"

"And after combating the unjust prepossessions against me, I stated, that so far from my cousin having any fair cause of resentment against me, when all was duly explained to him, I did not doubt that he would willingly give me the hand of his child."

"You did!" cried the Marchesa, amazed.

"And," continued the Count imperturbably, as he smoothed, with careless hand, the snowy plaits of his shirt front—"and that I should thus have the happiness of becoming myself the guarantee of my kinsman's loyalty—the agent for the restoration of his honours, while, in the eyes of the envious and malignant, I should clear up my own name from all suspicion that I had wronged him."

"And the Emperor consented?"

"*Pardieu*, my dear sister, what else could his majesty do? My proposition smoothed every obstacle, and reconciled policy with mercy. It remains, therefore, only to find out, what has hitherto baffled all our researches, the retreat of our dear kinsfolk, and to make myself a welcome lover to the demoiselle. There is some disparity of years, I own; but—unless your sex and my glass flatter me overmuch—I am still a match for many a gallant of five-and-twenty."

The Count said this with so charming a smile, and looked so pre-eminently handsome, that he carried off the coxcombry of the words as gracefully as if they had been spoken by some dazzling hero of the grand old comedy of Parisian life.

Then interlacing his fingers, and lightly leaning his hands, thus clasped, upon his sister's shoulder, he looked into her face, and said slowly—"And now, my sister, for some gentle but deserved reproach. Have you not sadly failed me in the task I imposed on your regard for my interests? Is it not some years since you first came to England on the mission of discovering

these worthy relations of ours? Did I not entreat you to seduce into your toils the man whom I knew to be my enemy, and who was indubitably acquainted with our cousin's retreat —a secret he has hitherto locked within his bosom? Did you not tell me, that though he was then in England, you could find no occasion even to meet him, but that you had obtained the friendship of the statesman to whom I directed your attention, as his most intimate associate? And yet you, whose charms are usually so irresistible, learn nothing from the statesman, as you see nothing of *Milord*. Nay, baffled and misled, you actually suppose that the quarry has taken refuge in France. You go thither—you pretend to search the capital—the provinces, Switzerland, *que sais-je?*—all in vain,—though—*foi de gentilhomme*—your police cost me dearly,—you return to England—the same chace, and the same result. *Palsambleu, ma sœur*, I do too much credit to your talents not to question your zeal. In a word, have you been in earnest—or have you not had some womanly pleasure in amusing yourself and abusing my trust?"

"Giulio," answered Beatrice sadly, "you know the influence you have exercised over my character and my fate. Your reproaches are not just. I made such inquiries as were in my power, and I have now cause to believe that I know one who is possessed of this secret, and can guide us to it."

"Ah, you do!" exclaimed the Count. Beatrice did not heed the exclamation, and hurried on.

"But grant that my heart shrunk from the task you imposed on me, would it not have been natural? When I first came to England, you informed me that your object in discovering the exiles was one which I could honestly aid. You naturally desired first to know if the daughter lived; if not, you were the heir. If she did, you assured me you desired to effect, through my mediation, some liberal compromise with Alphonso, by which you would have sought to obtain his restoration, provided he would leave you for life in possession of the grant you hold from the crown. While these were your objects, I did my best, ineffectual as it was, to obtain the information required."

"And what made me lose so important, though so ineffectual an ally?" asked the Count, still smiling; but a gleam that belied the smile shot from his eye.

"What! when you bade me receive and co-operate with the miserable spies—the false Italians—whom you sent over, and seek to entangle this poor exile, when found, in some rash correspondence, to be revealed to the court;—when you sought to seduce the daughter of the Counts of Peschiera, the descendant of those who had ruled in Italy, into the informer, the corrupter, and the traitress! No, Giulio—then I recoiled; and then, fearful of your own sway over me, I retreated into France. I have answered you frankly."

The Count removed his hands from the shoulder on which they had reclined so cordially.

"And this," said he, "is your wisdom, and this your gratitude. You, whose fortunes are bound up in mine—you, who subsist on my bounty—you, who ——"

"Hold," cried the Marchesa, rising, and with a burst of emotion, as if stung to the utmost, and breaking into revolt from the tyranny of years—"hold—gratitude! bounty! Brother, brother—what, indeed, do I owe to you? The shame and the misery of a life. While yet a child, you condemned me to marry against my will—against my heart—against my prayers—and laughed at my tears when I knelt to you for mercy. I was pure then, Giulio—pure and innocent as the flowers in my virgin crown. And now—now—"

Beatrice stopped abruptly, and clasped her hands before her face.

"Now you upbraid me," said the Count, unruffled by her sudden passion, "because I gave you in marriage to a man young and noble?"

"Old in vices, and mean of soul! The marriage I forgave you. You had the right, according to the customs of our country, to dispose of my hand. But I forgave you not the consolations that you whispered in the ear of a wretched and insulted wife."

"Pardon me the remark," replied the Count, with a courtly bend of his head, "but those consolations were also conformable

to the customs of our country, and I was not aware till now that you had wholly disdained them. And," continued the Count, "you were not so long a wife that the gall of the chain should smart still. You were soon left a widow—free, childless, young, beautiful."

"And penniless."

"True, Di Negra was a gambler, and very unlucky; no fault of mine. I could neither keep the cards from his hands, nor advise him how to play them."

"And my own portion? Oh Giulio, I knew but at his death why you had condemned me to that renegade Genoese. He owed you money, and, against honour, and I believe against law, you had accepted my fortune in discharge of the debt."

"He had no other way to discharge it—a debt of honour must be paid—old stories these. What matters? Since then my purse has been open to you."

"Yes, not as your sister, but your instrument—your spy! Yes, your purse has been open—with a niggard hand."

"*Un peu de conscience, ma chère,* you are so extravagant. But come, be plain. What would you?"

"I would be free from you."

"That is, you would form some second marriage with one of these rich island lords. *Ma foi,* I respect your ambition."

"It is not so high. I aim but to escape from slavery—to be placed beyond dishonourable temptation. I desire," cried Beatrice with increased emotion—"I desire to re-enter the life of woman."

"Eno'!" said the Count with a visible impatience; "is there anything in the attainment of your object that should render you indifferent to mine? You desire to marry, if I comprehend you right. And to marry, as becomes you, you should bring to your husband not debts, but a dowry. Be it so. I will restore the portion that I saved from the spendthrift clutch of the Genoese—the moment that it is mine to bestow—the moment that I am husband to my kinsman's heiress. And now, Beatrice, you imply that my former notions revolted your conscience; my present plan should content it; for by this marriage shall our kinsman regain his country, and repossess, at least, half his

lands. And if I am not an excellent husband to the demoiselle, it will be her own fault. I have sown my wild oats. *Je suis bon prince*, when I have things a little my own way. It is my hope and my intention, and certainly it will be my interest, to become *digne époux et irréprochable père de famille.* I speak lightly—'tis my way. I mean seriously. The little girl will be very happy with me, and I shall succeed in soothing all resentment her father may retain. Will you aid me then—yes or no? Aid me, and you shall indeed be free. The magician will release the fair spirit he has bound to his will. Aid me not, *ma chère*, and mark, I do not threaten—I do but warn—aid me not; grant that I become a beggar, and ask yourself what is to become of you—still young, still beautiful, and still penniless? Nay, worse than penniless; you have done me the honour, (and here the Count, looking on the table, drew a letter from a portfolio emblazoned with his arms and coronet,) you have done me the honour to consult me as to your debts."

"You will restore my fortune?" said the Marchesa, irresolutely—and averting her head from an odious schedule of figures.

"When my own, with your aid, is secured."

"But do you not overrate the value of my aid?"

"Possibly," said the Count, with a caressing suavity—and he kissed his sister's forehead. "Possibly; but, by my honour, I wish to repair to you any wrong, real or supposed, I may have done you in past times. I wish to find again my own dear sister. I may over-value your aid, but not the affection from which it comes. Let us be friends, *cara Beatrice mia*," added the Count, for the first time employing Italian words.

The Marchessa laid her head on his shoulder, and her tears flowed softly. Evidently this man had great influence over her—and evidently, whatever her cause for complaint, her affection for him was still sisterly and strong. A nature with fine flashes of generosity, spirit, honour, and passion, was hers—but uncultured, unguided—spoilt by the worst social examples—easily led into wrong—not always aware where the wrong was—letting affections good or bad whisper away her conscience or blind her reason. Such women are often far more dangerous when induced to wrong, than those who are thoroughly abandoned—

such women are the accomplices men like the Count of Peschiera most desire to obtain.

"Ah, Giulio," said Beatrice, after a pause, and looking up at him through her tears, "when you speak to me thus, you know you can do with me what you will. Fatherless and motherless, whom had my childhood to love and obey but you?"

"Dear Beatrice," murmured the Count tenderly—and he again kissed her forehead. "So," he continued more carelessly—"so the reconciliation is effected, and our interests and our hearts re-allied. Now, alas! to descend to business. You say that you know some one whom you believe to be acquainted with the lurking-place of my father-in-law—that is to be!"

"I think so. You remind me that I have an appointment with him this day: it is near the hour—I must leave you."

"To learn the secret?—Quick—quick. I have no fear of your success, if it is by his heart that you lead him!"

"You mistake; on his heart I have no hold. But he has a friend who loves me, and honourably, and whose cause he pleads. I think here that I have some means to control or persuade him. If not—ah, he is of a character that perplexes me in all but his worldly ambition; and how can we foreigners influence him through *that?*"

"Is he poor, or is he extravagant?"

"Not extravagant, and not positively poor, but dependent."

"Then we have him," said the Count composedly. "If his assistance be worth buying, we can bid high for it. *Sur mon âme*, I never yet knew money fail with any man who was both worldly and dependent. I put him and myself in your hands."

Thus saying, the Count opened the door, and conducted his sister with formal politeness to her carriage. He then returned, reseated himself, and mused in silence. As he did so, the muscles of his countenance relaxed. The levity of the Frenchman fled from his visage, and in his eye, as it gazed abstractedly into space, there was that steady depth so remarkable in the old portraits of Florentine diplomatist or Venetian oligarch. Thus seen, there was in that face, despite all its beauty, something that would have awed back even the fond gaze of love; something hard, collected, inscrutable, remorseless. But this

change of countenance did not last long. Evidently thought, though intense for the moment, was not habitual to the man. Evidently he had lived the life which takes all things lightly—so he rose with a look of fatigue, shook and stretched himself, as if to cast off, or grow out of, an unwelcome and irksome mood. An hour afterwards, the Count of Peschiera was charming all eyes, and pleasing all ears, in the saloon of a high-born beauty, whose acquaintance he had made at Vienna, and whose charms, according to that old and never-truth-speaking oracle, Polite Scandal, were now said to have attracted to London the brilliant foreigner.

CHAPTER III.

The Marchesa regained her house, which was in Curzon Street, and withdrew to her own room, to readjust her dress, and remove from her countenance all trace of the tears she had shed.

Half an hour afterwards she was seated in her drawing-room, composed and calm; nor, seeing her then, could you have guessed that she was capable of so much emotion and so much weakness. In that stately exterior, in that quiet attitude, in that elaborate and finished elegance which comes alike from the arts of the toilet and the conventional repose of rank, you could see but the woman of the world and the great lady.

A knock at the door was heard, and in a few moments there entered a visitor, with the easy familiarity of intimate acquaintance—a young man, but with none of the bloom of youth. His hair, fine as a woman's, was thin and scanty, but it fell low over the forehead, and concealed that noblest of our human features. "A gentleman," says Apuleius, "ought to wear his whole mind on his forehead."* The young visitor would never have committed so frank an imprudence. His cheek was pale, and in his step and his movements there was a languor that spoke of fatigued nerves or delicate health. But the light of the eye and the tone of the voice were those of a mental temperament controlling the bodily—vigorous and energetic. For the rest, his general appearance was distinguished by a refinement alike intellectual and social. Once seen, you would not easily forget him. And the reader no doubt already recognises

* "Hominem liberum et magnificum debere, si queat, in primori fronte, animum gestare."

Randal Leslie. His salutation, as I before said, was that of intimate familiarity; yet it was given and replied to with that unreserved openness which denotes the absence of a more tender sentiment.

Seating himself by the Marchesa's side, Randal began first to converse on the fashionable topics and gossip of the day; but it was observable, that, while he extracted from her the current anecdote and scandal of the great world, neither anecdote nor scandal did he communicate in return. Randal Leslie had already learned the art not to commit himself, nor to have quoted against him one ill-natured remark upon the eminent. Nothing more injures the man who would rise beyond the fame of the *salons*, than to be considered backbiter and gossip; "yet it is always useful," thought Randal Leslie, "to know the foibles—the small social and private springs by which the great are moved. Critical occasions may arise in which such knowledge may be power." And hence, perhaps, (besides a more private motive, soon to be perceived,) Randal did not consider his time thrown away in cultivating Madame di Negra's friendship. For despite much that was whispered against her, she had succeeded in dispelling the coldness with which she had at first been received in the London circles. Her beauty, her grace, and her high birth, had raised her into fashion, and the homage of men of the first station, while it perhaps injured her reputation as woman, added to her celebrity as fine lady. So much do we cold English, prudes though we be, forgive to the foreigner what we avenge on the native.

Sliding at last from these general topics into very well-bred and elegant personal compliment, and reciting various eulogies, which Lord this and the Duke of that had passed on the Marchesa's charms, Randal laid his hand on hers, with the license of admitted friendship, and said—

"But since you have deigned to confide in me, since when (happily for me, and with a generosity of which no *coquette* could have been capable) you, in good time, repressed into friendship feelings that might else have ripened into those you are formed to inspire and disdain to return, you told me with your charming smile, 'Let no one speak to me of love who does not

offer me his hand, and with it the means to supply tastes that I fear are terribly extravagant;'—since thus you allowed me to divine your natural objects, and upon that understanding our intimacy has been founded, you will pardon me for saying that the admiration you excite amongst these *grands seigneurs* I have named, only serves to defeat your own purpose, and scare away admirers less brilliant, but more in earnest. Most of these gentlemen are unfortunately married; and they who are not belong to those members of our aristocracy who, in marriage, seek more than beauty and wit—namely, connections to strengthen their political station, or wealth to redeem a mortgage and sustain a title."

"My dear Mr Leslie," replied the Marchesa—and a certain sadness might be detected in the tone of the voice and the droop of the eye—"I have lived long enough in the real world to appreciate the baseness and the falsehood of most of those sentiments which take the noblest names. I see through the hearts of the admirers you parade before me, and know that not one of them would shelter with his ermine the woman to whom he talks of his heart. Ah," continued Beatrice, with a softness of which she was unconscious, but which might have been extremely dangerous to youth less steeled and self-guarded than was Randal Leslie's—"ah, I am less ambitious than you suppose. I have dreamed of a friend, a companion, a protector, with feelings still fresh, undebased by the low round of vulgar dissipation and mean pleasures—of a heart so new, that it might restore my own to what it was in its happy spring. I have seen in your country some marriages, the mere contemplation of which has filled my eyes with delicious tears. I have learned in England to know the value of home. And with such a heart as I describe, and such a home, I could forget that I ever knew a less pure ambition."

"This language does not surprise me," said Randal; "yet it does not harmonise with your former answer to me."

"To you," repeated Beatrice, smiling, and regaining her lighter manner: "to you—true. But I never had the vanity to think that your affection for me could bear the sacrifices it would cost you in marriage; that you, with your ambition,

could bound your dreams of happiness to home. And then, too," said she, raising her head, and with a certain grave pride in her air—"and *then*, I could not have consented to share my fate with one whom my poverty would cripple. I could not listen to my heart, if it had beat for a lover without fortune, for to him I could then have brought but a burden, and betrayed him into a union with poverty and debt. *Now*, it may be different. Now I may have the dowry that befits my birth. And now I may be free to choose according to my heart as woman, not according to my necessities, as one poor, harassed, and despairing."

"Ah," said Randal, interested, and drawing still closer towards his fair companion—"ah, I congratulate you sincerely; you have cause, then, to think that you shall be—rich?"

The Marchesa paused before she answered, and during that pause Randal relaxed the web of the scheme which he had been secretly weaving, and rapidly considered whether, if Beatrice di Negra would indeed be rich, she might answer to himself as a wife; and in what way, if so, he had best change his tone from that of friendship into that of love. While thus reflecting, Beatrice answered—

"Not rich for an Englishwoman; for an Italian, yes. My fortune should be half a million—"

"Half a million!" cried Randal, and with difficulty he restrained himself from falling at her feet in adoration.

"Of francs!" continued the Marchesa.

"Francs! Ah," said Randal, with a long-drawn breath, and recovering from his sudden enthusiasm, "about twenty thousand pounds?—eight hundred a-year at four per cent. A very handsome portion, certainly—(Genteel poverty! he murmured to himself. What an escape I have had! but I see—I see. This will smooth all difficulties in the way of my better and earlier project.' I see)—a very handsome portion," he repeated aloud—"not for a *grand seigneur*, indeed, but still for a gentleman of birth and expectations worthy of your choice, if ambition be not your first object. Ah, while you spoke with such endearing eloquence of feelings that were fresh, of a heart that was new, of the happy English home, you might guess that my thoughts

ran to my friend who loves you so devotedly, and who so realises your idol. Proverbially, with us, happy marriages and happy homes are found not in the gay circles of London fashion, but at the hearths of our rural nobility—our untitled country gentlemen. And who, amongst all your adorers, can offer you a lot so really enviable as the one whom, I see by your blush, you already guess that I refer to?"

"Did I blush?" said the Marchesa, with a silvery laugh. "Nay, I think that your zeal for your friend misled you. But I will own frankly, I have been touched by his honest ingenuous love—so evident, yet rather looked than spoken. I have contrasted the love that honours me with the suitors that seek to degrade; more I cannot say. For though I grant that your friend is handsome, high-spirited, and generous, still he is not what—"

"You mistake, believe me," interrupted Randal. "You shall not finish your sentence. He *is* all that you do not yet suppose him; for his shyness, and his very love, his very respect for your superiority, do not allow his mind and his nature to appear to advantage. You, it is true, have a taste for letters and poetry rare among your countrywomen. He has not at present—few men have. But what Cimon would not be refined by so fair an Iphigenia? Such frivolities as he now shows belong but to youth and inexperience of life. Happy the brother who could see his sister the wife of Frank Hazeldean."

The Marchesa leant her cheek on her hand in silence. To her, marriage was more than it usually seems to dreaming maiden or to disconsolate widow. So had the strong desire to escape from the control of her unprincipled and remorseless brother grown a part of her very soul—so had whatever was best and highest in her very mixed and complex character been galled and outraged by her friendless and exposed position, the equivocal worship rendered to her beauty, the various debasements to which pecuniary embarrassments had subjected her—(not without design on the part of the Count, who, though grasping, was not miserly, and who by precarious and seemingly capricious gifts at one time, and refusals of all aid at another, had involved her in debt in order to retain his hold on her)—so utterly painful and humi-

liating to a woman of her pride and her birth was the station that she held in the world—that in marriage she saw liberty, life, honour, self-redemption; and these thoughts, while they compelled her to co-operate with the schemes, by which the Count, on securing to himself a bride, was to bestow on herself a dower, also disposed her now to receive with favour Randal Leslie's pleadings on behalf of his friend.

The advocate saw that he had made an impression, and with the marvellous skill which his knowledge of those natures that engaged his study bestowed on his intelligence, he continued to improve his cause by such representations as were likely to be most effective. With what admirable tact he avoided panegyric of Frank as the mere individual, and drew him rather as the type, the ideal of what a woman in Beatrice's position might desire, in the safety, peace, and honour of a home, in the trust, and constancy, and honest confiding love of its partner! He did not paint an elysium; he described a haven; he did not glowingly delineate a hero of romance—he soberly portrayed that Representative of the Respectable and the Real which a woman turns to when romance begins to seem to her but delusion. Verily, if you could have looked into the heart of the person he addressed, and heard him speak, you would have cried admiringly, "Knowledge *is* power; and this man, if as able on a larger field of action, should play no mean part in the history of his time."

Slowly Beatrice roused herself from the reveries which crept over her as he spoke—slowly, and with a deep sigh, and said—

"Well, well, grant all you say; at least before I can listen to so honourable a love, I must be relieved from the base and sordid pressure that weighs on me. I cannot say to the man who woos me, 'Will you pay the debts of the daughter of Franzini, and the widow of di Negra?'"

"Nay, your debts, surely, make so slight a portion of your dowry."

"But the dowry has to be secured;" and here, turning the tables upon her companion, as the apt proverb expresses it, Madame di Negra extended her hand to Randal, and said in her

most winning accents, "You are, then, truly and sincerely my friend?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"I prove that I do not, for I ask your assistance."

"Mine? How?"

"Listen; my brother has arrived in London—"

"I see that arrival announced in the papers."

"And he comes, empowered by the consent of the Emperor, to ask the hand of a relation and countrywoman of his; an alliance that will heal long family dissensions, and add to his own fortunes those of an heiress. My brother, like myself, has been extravagant. The dowry which by law he still owes me it would distress him to pay till this marriage be assured."

"I understand," said Randal. "But how can I aid this marriage?"

"By assisting us to discover the bride. She, with her father, sought refuge and concealment in England."

"The father had, then, taken part in some political disaffections, and was proscribed?"

"Exactly; and so well has he concealed himself, that he has baffled all our efforts to discover his retreat. My brother can obtain him his pardon in cementing this alliance—"

"Proceed."

"Ah Randal, Randal, is this the frankness of friendship? You know that I have before sought to obtain the secret of our relation's retreat—sought in vain to obtain it from Mr Egerton, who assuredly knows it—"

"But who communicates no secrets to living man," said Randal, almost bitterly; "who, close and compact as iron, is as little malleable to me as to you."

"Pardon me. I know you so well that I believe you could attain to any secret you sought earnestly to acquire. Nay, more, I believe that you know already that secret which I ask you to share with me."

"What on earth makes you think so?"

"When, some weeks ago, you asked me to describe the personal appearance and manners of the exile, which I did partly from the recollections of my childhood, partly from the description

given to me by others, I could not but notice your countenance, and remark its change; in spite," said the Marescha, smiling, and watching Randal while she spoke—"in spite of your habitual self-command. And when I pressed you to own that you had actually seen some one who tallied with that description, your denial did not deceive me. Still more, when returning recently, of your own accord, to the subject, you questioned me so shrewdly as to my motives in seeking the clue to our refugees, and I did not then answer you satisfactorily, I could detect—"

"Ha, ha," interrupted Randal with the low soft laugh by which occasionally he infringed upon Lord Chesterfield's recommendations to shun a merriment so natural as to be ill-bred—"ha, ha, you have the fault of all observers too minute and refined. But even granting that I may have seen some Italian exiles, (which is likely enough,) what could be more natural than my seeking to compare your description with their appearance; and granting that I might suspect some one amongst them to be the man you search for, what more natural also, than that I should desire to know if you meant him harm or good in discovering his 'whereabout?' For ill," added Randal, with an air of prudery—"ill would it become me to betray, even to friendship, the retreat of one who would hide from persecution; and even if I did so—for honour itself is a weak safeguard against your fascinations—such indiscretion might be fatal to my future career."

"How?"

"Do you not say that Egerton knows the secret, yet will not communicate?—and is he a man who would ever forgive in me an imprudence that committed himself? My dear friend, I will tell you more. When Audley Egerton first noticed my growing intimacy with you, he said, with his usual dryness of counsel, 'Randal, I do not ask you to discontinue acquaintance with Madame di Negra—for an acquaintance with women like her forms the manners, and refines the intellect; but charming women are dangerous, and Madame di Negra is—a charming woman."

The Marchesa's face flushed. Randal resumed: "'Your fair acquaintance' (I am still quoting Egerton) 'seeks to discover

the home of a countryman of hers. She suspects that I know it. She may try to learn it through you. Accident may possibly give you the information she requires. Beware how you betray it. By one such weakness I should judge of your general character. He from whom a woman can extract a secret will never be fit for public life.' Therefore, my dear Marchesa, even supposing I possess this secret, you would be no true friend of mine to ask me to reveal what would imperil all my prospects. For as yet," added Randal, with a gloomy shade on his brow—"as yet, I do not stand alone and erect—I *lean;*—I am dependent."

"There may be a way," replied Madame di Negra, persisting, "to communicate this intelligence, without the possibility of Mr Egerton's tracing our discovery to yourself; and, though I will not press you further, I add this—You urge me to accept your friend's hand; you seem interested in the success of his suit, and you plead it with a warmth that shows how much you regard what you suppose is his happiness; I will never accept his hand till I can do so without blush for my penury—till my dowry is secured, and that can only be by my brother's union with the exile's daughter. For your friend's sake, therefore, think well how you can aid me in the first step to that alliance. The young lady once discovered, and my brother has no fear for the success of his suit.

"And you would marry Frank if the dower was secured?"

"Your arguments in his favour seem irresistible," replied Beatrice, looking down.

A flash went from Randal's eyes, and he mused a few moments.

Then slowly rising, and drawing on his gloves, he said—

"Well, at least you so far reconcile my honour towards aiding your research, that you now inform me you mean no ill to the exile."

"Ill!—the restoration to fortune, honours, his native land."

"And you so far enlist my heart on your side, that you inspire me with the hope to contribute to the happiness of two friends whom I dearly love. I will, therefore, diligently seek to ascertain if, among the refugees I have met with, lurk those whom you seek; and if so, I will thoughtfully consider how to

give you the clue. Meanwhile, not one incautious word to Egerton."

"Trust me—I am a woman of the world."

Randal now had gained the door. He paused, and renewed carelessly—

"This young lady must be heiress to great wealth, to induce a man of your brother's rank to take so much pains to discover her."

"Her wealth *will* be vast," replied the Marchesa; "and if anything from wealth or influence in a foreign state could be permitted to prove my brother's gratitude—"

"Ah, fie!" interrupted Randal; and, approaching Madame di Negra, he lifted her hand to his lips, and said gallantly—

"This is reward enough to your *preux chevalier*."

With those words he took his leave.

CHAPTER IV.

With his hands behind him, and his head drooping on his breast—slow, stealthy, noiseless, Randal Leslie glided along the streets on leaving the Italian's house. Across the scheme he had before revolved, there glanced another yet more glittering, for its gain might be more sure and immediate. If the exile's daughter were heiress to such wealth, might he himself hope——. He stopped short even in his own soliloquy, and his breath came quick. Now, in his last visit to Hazeldean, he had come in contact with Riccabocca, and been struck by the beauty of Violante. A vague suspicion had crossed him that these might be the persons of whom the Marchesa was in search, and the suspicion had been confirmed by Beatrice's description of the refugee she desired to discover. But as he had not then learned the reason for her inquiries, nor conceived the possibility that he could have any personal interest in ascertaining the truth, he had only classed the secret in question among those the farther research into which might be left to time and occasion. Certainly the reader will not do the unscrupulous intellect of Randal Leslie the injustice to suppose that he was deterred from confiding to his fair friend all that he knew of Riccabocca, by the refinement of honour to which he had so chivalrously alluded. He had correctly stated Audley Egerton's warning against any indiscreet confidence, though he had forborne to mention a more recent and direct renewal of the same caution. His first visit to Hazeldean had been paid without consulting Egerton. He had been passing some days at his father's house, and had gone over thence to the Squire's. On his return

to London, he had, however, mentioned this visit to Audley, who had seemed annoyed and even displeased at it, though Randal knew sufficient of Egerton's character to guess that such feelings could scarce be occasioned merely by his estrangement from his half-brother. This dissatisfaction had, therefore, puzzled the young man. But as it was necessary to his views to establish intimacy with the Squire, he did not yield the point with his customary deference to his patron's whims. He therefore observed, that he should be very sorry to do anything displeasing to his benefactor, but that his father had been naturally anxious that he should not appear positively to slight the friendly overtures of Mr Hazeldean.

"Why naturally?" asked Egerton.

"Because you know that Mr Hazeldean is a relation of mine—that my grandmother was a Hazeldean."

"Ah!" said Egerton, who, as it has been before said, knew little, and cared less, about the Hazeldean pedigree, "I was either not aware of that circumstance, or had forgotten it. And your father thinks that the Squire may leave you a legacy?"

"Oh, sir, my father is not so mercenary—such an idea never entered his head. But the Squire himself has indeed said—'Why, if anything happened to Frank, you would be next heir to my lands, and therefore we ought to know each other.' But—"

"Enough," interrupted Egerton. "I am the last man to pretend to the right of standing between you and a single chance of fortune, or of aid to it. And whom did you meet at Hazeldean?"

"There was no one there, sir; not even Frank."

"Hum. Is the Squire not on good terms with his parson? Any quarrel about tithes?"

"Oh, no quarrel. I forgot Mr Dale; I saw him pretty often. He admires and praises you very much, sir."

"Me—and why? What did he say of me?"

"That your heart was as sound as your head; that he had once seen you about some old parishioners of his; and that he had been much impressed with a depth of feeling he could not have anticipated in a man of the world, and a statesman."

"Oh, that was all; some affair when I was member for Lansmere?"

"I suppose so."

Here the conversation had broken off; but the next time Randal was led to visit the Squire he had formally asked Egerton's consent, who, after a moment's hesitation, had as formally replied, "I have no objection."

On returning from this visit, Randal mentioned that he had seen Riccabocca: and Egerton, a little startled at first, said composedly, "Doubtless one of the political refugees; take care not to set Madame di Negra on his track. Remember, she is suspected of being a spy of the Austrian government."

"Rely on me, sir," said Randal; "but I should think this poor Doctor can scarcely be the person she seeks to discover."

"That is no affair of ours," answered Egerton; "we are English gentlemen, and make not a step towards the secrets of another."

Now, when Randal revolved this rather ambiguous answer, and recalled the uneasiness with which Egerton had first heard of his visit to Hazeldean, he thought that he was indeed near the secret which Egerton desired to conceal from him and from all—viz., the incognito of the Italian whom Lord L'Estrange had taken under his protection.

"My cards," said Randal to himself, as, with a deep-drawn sigh, he resumed his soliloquy, "are become difficult to play. On the one hand, to entangle Frank into marriage with this foreigner, the Squire could never forgive him. On the other hand, if she will not marry him without the dowry—and that depends on her brother's wedding this countrywoman—and that countrywoman be, as I surmise, Violante—and Violante be this heiress, and to be won by me! Tush, tush. Such delicate scruples in a woman so placed and so constituted as Beatrice di Negra must be easily talked away. Nay, the loss itself of this alliance to her brother, the loss of her own dowry—the very pressure of poverty and debt—would compel her into the sole escape left to her option. I will then follow up the old plan; I will go down to Hazeldean, and see if there be any substance

in the new one;—and then to reconcile both. Aha—the House of Leslie shall rise yet from its ruin—and—"

Here he was startled from his reverie by a friendly slap on the shoulder, and an exclamation—"Why, Randal, you are more absent than when you used to steal away from the cricket-ground, muttering Greek verses at Eton."

"My dear Frank," said Randal, "you—you are so *brusque*, and I was just thinking of you."

"Were you? And kindly, then, I am sure," said Frank Hazeldean, his honest handsome face lighted up with the unsuspecting genial trust of friendship; "and heaven knows," he added, with a sadder voice, and a graver expression on his eye and lip—"heaven knows I want all the kindness you can give me!"

"I thought," said Randal, "that your father's last supply, of which I was fortunate enough to be the bearer, would clear off your more pressing debts. I don't pretend to preach, but really I must say, once more, you should not be so extravagant."

FRANK, (seriously.)—"I have done my best to reform. I have sold off my horses, and I have not touched dice nor card these six months: I would not even put into the raffle for the last Derby." This last was said with the air of a man who doubted the possibility of obtaining belief to some assertion of preternatural abstinence and virtue.

RANDAL.—"Is it possible? But, with such self-conquest, how is it that you cannot contrive to live within the bounds of a very liberal allowance?"

FRANK, (despondingly).—"Why, when a man once gets his head under water, it is so hard to float back again on the surface. You see, I attribute all my embarrassments to that first concealment of my debts from my father, when they could have been so easily met, and when he came up to town so kindly."

"I am sorry, then, that I gave you that advice."

"Oh, you meant it so kindly, I don't reproach you; it was all my own fault."

"Why, indeed, I did urge you to pay off that moiety of your debts left unpaid, with your allowance. Had you done so, all had been well."

"Yes; but poor Borrowell got into such a scrape at Goodwood—I could not resist him: a debt of honour—*that* must be paid; so when I signed another bill for him, he could not pay it, poor fellow! Really he would have shot himself, if I had not renewed it. And now it is swelled to such an amount with that cursed interest, that *he* never can pay it; and one bill, of course, begets another—and to be renewed every three months; 'tis the devil and all! So little as I ever got for all I have borrowed," added Frank, with a kind of rueful amaze. "Not £1500 ready money; and the interest would cost me almost as much yearly, —if I had it."

"Only £1500!"

"Well—besides seven large chests of the worst cigars you ever smoked; three pipes of wine that no one would drink; and a great bear, that had been imported from Greenland for the sake of its grease."

"That should at least have saved you a bill with your hairdresser."

"I paid his bill with it," said Frank, "and very good-natured he was to take the monster off my hands—it had already hugged two soldiers and one groom into the shape of a flounder. I tell you what," resumed Frank, after a short pause, "I have a great mind even now to tell my father honestly all my embarrassments."

RANDAL, (solemnly.)—"Hum!"

FRANK.—"What? don't you think it would be the best way? I never can save enough—never can pay off what I owe; and it rolls like a snowball."

RANDAL.—"Judging by the Squire's talk, I think that with the first sight of your affairs you would forfeit his favour for ever; and your mother would be so shocked, especially after supposing that the sum I brought you so lately sufficed to pay off every claim on you. If you had not assured her of that, it might be different; but she who so hates an untruth, and who said to the Squire, 'Frank says this will clear him; and, with all his faults, Frank never yet told a lie!'"

"Oh, my dear mother!—I fancy I hear her!" cried Frank with deep emotion. "But I did not tell a lie, Randal; I did not say that that sum would clear me."

"You empowered and begged me to say so," replied Randal, with grave coldness; "and don't blame me if I believed you."

"No, no! I only said it would clear me for the moment."

"I misunderstood you, then, sadly; and such mistakes involve my own honour. Pardon me, Frank; don't ask my aid in future. You see, with the best intentions, I only compromise myself."

"If you forsake me, I may as well go and throw myself into the river," said Frank in a tone of despair; "and, sooner or later, my father must know my necessities. The Jews threaten to go to him already; and the longer the delay, the more terrible the explanation."

"I don't see why your father should ever learn the state of your affairs; and it seems to me that you could pay off these usurers, and get rid of these bills, by raising money on comparatively easy terms—"

"How?" cried Frank eagerly.

"Why, the Casino property is entailed on you, and you might obtain a sum upon that, not to be paid till the property becomes yours."

"At my poor father's death? Oh, no—no! I cannot bear the idea of this cold-blooded calculation on a father's death. I know it is not uncommon; I know other fellows who have done it, but they never had parents so kind as mine; and even in them it shocked and revolted me. The contemplating a father's death, and profiting by the contemplation,—it seems a kind of parricide: it is not natural, Randal. Besides, don't you remember what the Governor said—he actually wept while he said it—'Never calculate on my death; I could not bear that.' Oh, Randal, don't speak of it!"

"I respect your sentiments; but still, all the post-obits you could raise could not shorten Mr Hazeldean's life by a day. However, dismiss that idea; we must think of some other device. Ha, Frank! you are a handsome fellow, and your expectations are great—why don't you marry some woman with money?"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Frank, colouring. "You know, Randal, that there is but one woman in the world I can ever think of,

and I love her so devotedly, that, though I was as gay as most men before, I really feel as if the rest of her sex had lost every charm. I was passing through the street now—merely to look up at her windows."

"You speak of Madame di Negra? I have just left her. Certainly she is two or three years older than you; but if you can get over that misfortune, why not marry her?"

"Marry her!" cried Frank in amaze, and all his colour fled from his cheeks. "Marry her! Are you serious?"

"Why not?"

"But even if she, who is so accomplished, so admired—even if she would accept me, she is, you know, poorer than myself. She has told me so, frankly. That woman has such a noble heart! and—and—my father would never consent, nor my mother either. I know they would not."

"Because she is a foreigner?"

"Yes—partly."

"Yet the Squire suffered his cousin to marry a foreigner."

"That was different. He had no control over Jemima; and a daughter-in-law is so different; and my father is so English in his notions; and Madame di Negra, you see, is altogether so foreign. Her very graces would be against her in his eyes."

"I think you do both your parents injustice. A foreigner of low birth—an actress or singer, for instance—of course would be highly objectionable; but a woman, like Madame di Negra, of such high birth and connections—"

Frank shook his head. "I don't think the Governor would care a straw about her connections, if she were a king's daughter. He considers all foreigners pretty much alike. And then, you know" (Frank's voice sank into a whisper)—"you know that one of the very reasons why she is so dear to me, would be an insuperable objection to the old-fashioned folks at home."

"I don't understand you, Frank."

"I love her the more," said young Hazeldean, raising his front with a noble pride, that seemed to speak of his descent from a race of cavaliers and gentlemen—"I love her the more because the world has slandered her name—because I believe her to be pure and wronged. But would they at the Hall—they who do

not see with a lover's eyes—they who have all the stubborn English notions about the indecorum and license of Continental manners, and will so readily credit the worst?—Oh, no—I love, I cannot help it—but I have no hope."

"It is very possible that you may be right," exclaimed Randal, as if struck and half convinced by his companion's argument—"very possible; and certainly I think that the homely folks at the Hall would fret and fume at first, if they heard you were married to Madame di Negra. Yet still, when your father learned that you had done so, not from passion alone, but to save him from all pecuniary sacrifice—to clear yourself of debt—to—"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Frank impatiently.

"I have reason to know that Madame di Negra will have as large a portion as your father could reasonably expect you to receive with any English wife. And when this is properly stated to the Squire, and the high position and rank of your wife fully established and brought home to him—for I must think that these would tell, despite your exaggerated notions of his prejudices—and then, when he really sees Madame di Negra, and can judge of her beauty and rare gifts, upon my word, I think, Frank, that there would be no cause for fear. After all, too, you are his only son. He will have no option but to forgive you; and I know how anxiously both your parents wish to see you settled in life."

Frank's whole countenance became illuminated. "There is no one who understands the Squire like you, certainly," said he, with lively joy. "He has the highest opinion of your judgment. And you really believe you could smooth matters?"

"I believe so, but I should be sorry to induce you to run any risk; and if, on cool consideration, you think that risk is incurred, I strongly advise you to avoid all occasion of seeing the poor Marchesa. Ah, you wince; but I say it for her sake as well as your own. First, you must be aware, that, unless you have serious thoughts of marriage, your attentions can but add to the very rumours that, equally groundless, you so feelingly resent; and, secondly, because I don't think any man has a right to win the affections of a woman—especially a woman

who seems to me likely to love with her whole heart and soul —merely to gratify his own vanity."

"Vanity! Good heavens! can you think so poorly of me? But as to the Marchesa's affection," continued Frank, with a faltering voice, "do you really and honestly believe that they are to be won by me?"

"I fear lest they may be half won already," said Randal, with a smile and a shake of the head; "but she is too proud to let you see any effect you may produce on her, especially when, as I take it for granted, you have never hinted at the hope of obtaining her hand."

"I never till now conceived such a hope. My dear Randal, all my cares have vanished—I tread upon air—I have a great mind to call on her at once."

"Stay, stay," said Randal. "Let me give you a caution. I have just informed you that Madame di Negra will have, what you suspected not before, a fortune suitable to her birth. Any abrupt change in your manner at present might induce her to believe that you were influenced by that intelligence."

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank, stopping short, as if wounded to the quick. "And I feel guilty—feel as if I *was* influenced by that intelligence. So I am, too, when I reflect," he continued, with a *naïveté* that was half pathetic; "but I hope she will not be *very* rich—if so, I'll not call."

"Make your mind easy, it is but a portion of some twenty or thirty thousand pounds, that would just suffice to discharge all your debts, clear away all obstacle to your union, and in return for which you could secure a more than adequate jointure and settlement on the Casino property. Now I am on that head, I will be yet more communicative. Madame di Negra has a noble heart, as you say, and told me herself, that, until her brother on his arrival had assured her of this dowry, she would never have consented to marry you—never crippled with her own embarrassments the man she loves. Ah! with what delight she will hail the thought of assisting you to win back your father's heart! But be guarded, meanwhile. And now, Frank, what say you—would it not be well if I ran down to Hazeldean to sound your parents? It is rather inconvenient to me, to be

sure, to leave town just at present; but I would do more than that to render you a smaller service. Yes, I'll go to Rood Hall to-morrow, and thence to Hazeldean. I am sure your father will press me to stay, and I shall have ample opportunities to judge of the manner in which he would be likely to regard your marriage with Madame di Negra—supposing always it were properly put to him. We can then act accordingly."

"My dear, dear Randal, how can I thank you? If ever a poor fellow like me can serve you in return—but that's impossible."

"Why, certainly, I will never ask you to be security to a bill of mine," said Randal, laughing. "I practise the economy I preach."

"Ah!" said Frank, with a groan, "that is because your mind is cultivated—you have so many resources; and all my faults have come from idleness. If I had had anything to do on a rainy day, I should never have got into these scrapes."

"Oh! you will have enough to do some day managing your property. We who have no property must find one in knowledge. Adieu, my dear Frank—I must go home now. By the way, you have never, by chance, spoken of the Riccaboccas to Madame di Negra?"

"The Riccaboccas? No. That's well thought of. It may interest her to know that a relation of mine has married her countryman. Very odd that I never did mention it; but, to say truth, I really do talk so little to her; she is so superior, and I feel positively shy with her."

"Do me the favour, Frank," said Randal, waiting patiently till this reply ended—for he was devising all the time what reason to give for his request—"never to allude to the Riccaboccas either to her or to her brother, to whom you are sure to be presented."

"Why not allude to them?"

Randal hesitated a moment. His invention was still at fault, and, for a wonder, he thought it the best policy to go pretty near the truth.

"Why, I will tell you. The Marchesa conceals nothing from her brother, and he is one of the few Italians who are in high favour with the Austrian court."

"Well!"

"And I suspect that poor Dr Riccabocca fled his country from some mad experiment at revolution, and is still hiding from the Austrian police."

"But they can't hurt him here," said Frank, with an Englishman's dogged inborn conviction of the sanctity of his native island. "I should like to see an Austrian pretend to dictate to us whom to receive and whom to reject."

"Hum—that's true and constitutional, no doubt; but Riccabocca may have excellent reasons—and, to speak plainly, I know he has, (perhaps as affecting the safety of friends in Italy,)—for preserving his incognito, and we are bound to respect those reasons without inquiring further."

"Still, I cannot think so meanly of Madame di Negra," persisted Frank, (shrewd here, though credulous elsewhere, and both from his sense of honour,) "as to suppose that she would descend to be a spy, and injure a poor countryman of her own, who trusts to the same hospitality she receives herself at our English hands. Oh! if I thought that, I could not love her!" added Frank, with energy.

"Certainly you are right. But see in what a false position you would place both her brother and herself. If they knew Riccabocca's secret, and proclaimed it to the Austrian government, as you say, it would be cruel and mean; but, if they knew it and concealed, it might involve them both in the most serious consequences. You know the Austrian policy is proverbially so jealous and tyrannical?"

"Well, the newspapers say so, certainly."

"And, in short, your discretion can do no harm, and your indiscretion may. Therefore, give me your word, Frank. I can't stay to argue now."

"I'll not allude to the Riccaboccas, upon my honour," answered Frank; "still, I am sure that they would be as safe with the Marchesa as with"——

"I rely on your honour," interrupted Randal hastily, and hurried off.

CHAPTER V.

Towards the evening of the following day, Randal Leslie walked slowly from a village in the main road, (about two miles from Rood Hall,) at which he had got out of the coach. He passed through meads and corn-fields, and by the skirts of woods which had formerly belonged to his ancestors, but had been long since alienated. He was alone amidst the haunts of his boyhood, the scenes in which he had first invoked the grand Spirit of Knowledge, to bid the Celestial Still One minister to the commands of an earthly and turbulent ambition. He paused often in his path, especially when the undulations of the ground gave a glimpse of the grey church-tower, or the gloomy firs that rose above the desolate wastes of Rood.

"Here," thought Randal, with a softening eye—"here, how often, comparing the fertility of the lands passed away from the inheritance of my fathers, with the forlorn wilds that are left to their mouldering hall—here, how often have I said to myself —'I will rebuild the fortunes of my house.' And straightway Toil lost its aspect of drudge, and grew kingly, and books became as living armies to serve my thought. Again—again—O thou haughty Past, brace and strengthen me in the battle with the Future." His pale lips writhed as he soliloquised, for his conscience spoke to him while he thus addressed his will, and its voice was heard more audibly in the quiet of the rural landscape, than amidst the turmoil and din of that armed and sleepless camp which we call a city.

Doubtless, though Ambition have objects more vast and beneficent than the restoration of a name,—*that* in itself is high and chivalrous, and appeals to a strong interest in the human

heart. But all emotions, and all ends, of a nobler character, had seemed to filter themselves free from every golden grain in passing through the mechanism of Randal's intellect, and came forth at last into egotism clear and unalloyed. Nevertheless, it is a strange truth that, to a man of cultivated mind, however perverted and vicious, there are vouchsafed gleams of brighter sentiments, irregular perceptions of moral beauty, denied to the brutal unreasoning wickedness of uneducated villany—which perhaps ultimately serve as his punishment—according to the old thought of the satirist, that there is no greater curse than to perceive virtue, yet adopt vice. And as the solitary schemer walked slowly on, and his childhood—innocent at least of deed—came distinct before him through the halo of bygone dreams—dreams far purer than those from which he now rose each morning to the active world of Man—a profound melancholy crept over him, and suddenly he exclaimed aloud, "*Then* I aspired to be renowned and great—*now*, how is it that, so advanced in my career, all that seemed lofty in the means has vanished from me, and the only means that I contemplate are those which my childhood would have called poor and vile? Ah! is it that I then read but books, and now my knowledge has passed onward, and men contaminate more than books? But," he continued, in a lower voice, as if arguing with himself, "if power is only so to be won—and of what use is knowledge if it be not power—does not success in life justify all things? And who prizes the wise man if he fails?" He continued his way, but still the soft tranquillity around rebuked him, and still his reason was dissatisfied, as well as his conscience. There are times when Nature, like a bath of youth, seems to restore to the jaded soul its freshness—times from which some men have emerged, as if re-born. The crises of life are very silent. Suddenly the scene opened on Randal Leslie's eyes. The bare desert common—the dilapidated church—the old house, partially seen in the dank dreary hollow, into which it seemed to Randal to have sunken deeper and lowlier than when he saw it last. And on the common were some young men playing at hockey. That old-fashioned game, now very uncommon in England, except at schools, was still preserved in the primitive vicinity

of Rood by the young yeomen and farmers. Randal stood by the stile and looked on, for among the players he recognised his brother Oliver. Presently the ball was struck towards Oliver, and the group instantly gathered round that young gentleman, and snatched him from Randal's eye; but the elder brother heard a displeasing din, a derisive laughter. Oliver had shrunk from the danger of the thick-clubbed sticks that plied around him, and received some stroke across the legs, for his voice rose whining, and was drowned by shouts of, "Go to your mammy. That's Noll Leslie—all over. Butter shins."

Randal's sallow face became scarlet. "The jest of boors—a Leslie!" he muttered, and ground his teeth. He sprang over the stile, and walked erect and haughtily across the ground. The players cried out indignantly. Randal raised his hat, and they recognised him, and stopped the game. For him at least a certain respect was felt. Oliver turned round quickly, and ran up to him. Randal caught his arm firmly, and, without saying a word to the rest, drew him away towards the house. Oliver cast a regretful, lingering look behind him, rubbed his shins, and then stole a timid glance towards Randal's severe and moody countenance.

"You are not angry that I was playing at hockey with our neighbours," said he deprecatingly, observing that Randal would not break the silence.

"No," replied the elder brother; "but, in associating with his inferiors, a gentleman still knows how to maintain his dignity. There is no harm in playing with inferiors, but it is necessary to a gentleman to play so that he is not the laughing-stock of clowns."

Oliver hung his head, and made no answer. They came into the slovenly precincts of the court, and the pigs stared at them from the palings, as they had stared, years before, at Frank Hazeldean.

Mr Leslie senior, in a shabby straw-hat, was engaged in feeding the chickens before the threshold, and he performed even that occupation with a maundering lack-a-daisical slothfulness, dropping down the grains almost one by one from his inert dreamy fingers.

Randal's sister, her hair still and for ever hanging about her ears, was seated on a rush-bottom chair, reading a tattered novel; and from the parlour window was heard the querulous voice of Mrs Leslie, in high fidget and complaint.

Somehow or other, as the young heir to all this helpless poverty stood in the courtyard, with his sharp, refined, intelligent features, and his strange elegance of dress and aspect, one better comprehended how, left solely to the egotism of his knowledge and his ambition, in such a family, and without any of the sweet nameless lessons of Home, he had grown up into such close and secret solitude of soul—how the mind had taken so little nutriment from the heart, and how that affection and respect which the warm circle of the hearth usually calls forth had passed with him to the graves of dead fathers, growing, as it were, bloodless and ghoul-like amidst the charnels on which they fed.

"Ha, Randal, boy," said Mr Leslie, looking up lazily, "how d'ye do? Who could have expected you? My dear—my dear," he cried, in a broken voice, and as if in helpless dismay, "here's Randal, and he'll be wanting dinner, or supper, or something." But, in the meanwhile, Randal's sister Juliet had sprung up and thrown her arms round her brother's neck, and he had drawn her aside caressingly, for Randal's strongest human affection was for this sister.

"You are growing very pretty, Juliet," said he, smoothing back her hair; "why do yourself such injustice—why not pay more attention to your appearance, as I have so often begged you to do?"

"I did not expect you, dear Randal; you always come so suddenly, and catch us *en dish-a-bill*."

"Dish-a-bill!" echoed Randal, with a groan. "*Dishabille!*—you ought never to be so caught!"

"No one else does so catch us—nobody else ever comes—Heigho!" and the young lady sighed very heartily.

"Patience, patience; my day is coming, and then yours, my sister," replied Randal with genuine pity, as he gazed upon what a little care could have trained into so fair a flower, and what now looked so like a weed.

Here Mrs Leslie, in a state of intense excitement—having rushed through the parlour—leaving a fragment of her gown between the yawning brass of the never-mended Brummagem work-table—tore across the hall—whirled out of the door, scattering the chickens to the right and left, and clutched hold of Randal in her motherly embrace. "La, how you do shake my nerves," she cried, after giving him a most hasty and uncomfortable kiss. "And you are hungry too, and nothing in the house but cold mutton! Jenny, Jenny—I say Jenny! Juliet, have you seen Jenny? Where's Jenny? Out with the odd man, I'll be bound."

"I am not hungry, mother," said Randal; "I wish for nothing but tea." Juliet, scrambling up her hair, darted into the house to prepare the tea, and also to "tidy herself." She dearly loved her fine brother, but she was greatly in awe of him.

Randal seated himself on the broken pales. "Take care they don't come down," said Mr Leslie with some anxiety.

"Oh, sir, I am very light; nothing comes down with me."

The pigs stared up, and grunted in amaze at the stranger.

"Mother," said the young man, detaining Mrs Leslie, who wanted to set off in chase of Jenny—"mother, you should not let Oliver associate with those village boors. It is time to think of a profession for him."

"Oh, he eats us out of house and home—such an appetite! But as to a profession—what is he fit for! He will never be a scholar."

Randal nodded a moody assent; for, indeed, Oliver had been sent to Cambridge, and supported there out of Randal's income from his official pay;—and Oliver had been plucked for his Little Go.

"There is the army," said the elder brother—"a gentleman's calling. How handsome Juliet ought to be—but—I left money for masters—and she pronounces French like a chambermaid."

"Yet she is fond of her book too. She's always reading, and good for nothing else."

"Reading!—those trashy novels!"

"So like you—you always come to scold, and make things

unpleasant," said Mrs Leslie peevishly. "You are grown too fine for us, and I am sure we suffer affronts enough from others, not to want a little respect from our own children."

"I did not mean to affront you," said Randal sadly. "Pardon me. But who else has done so?"

Then Mrs Leslie went into a minute and most irritating catalogue of all the mortifications and insults she had received; the grievances of a petty provincial family, with much pretension and small power; of all people, indeed, without the disposition to please—without the ability to serve—who exaggerate every offence, and are thankful for no kindness. Farmer Jones had insolently refused to send his waggon twenty miles for coals. Mr Giles, the butcher, requesting the payment of his bill, had stated that the custom at Rood was too small for him to allow credit. Squire Thornhill, who was the present owner of the fairest slice of the old Leslie domains, had taken the liberty to ask permission to shoot over Mr Leslie's land, since Mr Leslie did not preserve. Lady Spratt (new people from the city, who hired a neighbouring country-seat) had taken a discharged servant of Mrs Leslie's without applying for the character. The Lord-Lieutenant had given a ball, and had not invited the Leslies. Mr Leslie's tenants had voted against their landlord's wish at the recent election. More than all, Squire Hazeldean and his Harry had called at Rood, and though Mrs Leslie had screamed out to Jenny, "Not at home," she had been seen at the window, and the Squire had actually forced his way in, and caught the whole family "in a state not fit to be seen." That was a trifle;—but the Squire had presumed to instruct Mr Leslie how to manage his property, and Mrs Hazeldean had actually told Juliet to hold up her head, and tie up her hair, "as if we were her cottagers!" said Mrs Leslie with the pride of a Montfydget.

All these, and various other annoyances, though Randal was too sensible not to perceive their insignificance, still galled and mortified the listening heir of Rood. They showed, at least, even to the well-meant officiousness of the Hazeldeans, the small account in which the fallen family was held. As he sat

still on the moss-grown pales, gloomy and taciturn, his mother standing beside him, with her cap awry, Mr Leslie shamblingly sauntered up, and said in a pensive, dolorous whine—

"I wish we had a good sum of money, Randal, boy!"

To do Mr Leslie justice, he seldom gave vent to any wish that savoured of avarice. His mind must be singularly aroused, to wander out of its normal limits of sluggish, dull content.

So Randal looked at him in surprise, and said, "Do you, sir? —why?"

"The manors of Rood and Dulmansberry, and all the lands therein, which my great-grandfather sold away, are to be sold again when Squire Thornhill's eldest son comes of age, to cut off the entail. Sir John Spratt talks of buying them. I should like to have them back again! 'Tis a shame to see the Leslie estates hawked about, and bought by Spratts and people. I wish I had a great—great sum of ready money."

The poor gentleman extended his helpless fingers as he spoke, and fell into a dejected reverie.

Randal sprang from the paling, a movement which frightened the contemplative pigs, and set them off squalling and scampering. "When does young Thornhill come of age?"

"He was nineteen last August. I know it, because the day he was born I picked up my fossil of the sea-horse, just by Dulmansberry church, when the joy-bells were ringing. My fossil sea-horse! It will be an heirloom, Randal—"

"Two years—nearly two years—yet—ah, ah!" said Randal; and his sister now appearing, to announce that tea was ready, he threw his arm round her neck and kissed her. Juliet had arranged her hair and trimmed up her dress. She looked very pretty, and she had now the air of a gentlewoman—something of Randal's own refinement in her slender proportions and well-shaped head.

"Be patient, patient still, my dear sister," whispered Randal, "and keep your heart whole for two years longer."

The young man was gay and good-humoured over his simple meal, while his family grouped round him. When it was over, Mr Leslie lighted his pipe, and called for his brandy and water. Mrs Leslie began to question about London and Court, and the

new King and the new Queen, and Mr Audley Egerton, and hoped Mr Egerton would leave Randal all his money, and that Randal would marry a rich woman, and that the King would make him a prime-minister one of these days; and then she should like to see if Farmer Jones would refuse to send his waggon for coals! And every now and then, as the word "riches" or "money" caught Mr Leslie's ears, he shook his head, drew his pipe from his mouth, and muttered, "A Spratt should not have what belonged to my great-great-grandfather. If I had a good sum of ready money!—the old family estates!" Oliver and Juliet sate silent, and on their good behaviour; and Randal, indulging his own reveries, dreamily heard the words "money," "Spratt," "great-great-grandfather," "rich wife," "family estates;" and they sounded to him vague and afar off, like whispers from the world of romance and legend—weird prophecies of things to be.

Such was the hearth which warmed the viper that nestled and gnawed at the heart of Randal, poisoning all the aspirations that youth should have rendered pure, ambition lofty, and knowledge beneficent and divine.

CHAPTER VI.

When the rest of the household were in deep sleep, Randal stood long at his open window, looking over the dreary, comfortless scene—the moon gleaming from skies half-autumnal, half-wintry, upon squalid decay, through the ragged fissures of the firs; and when he lay down to rest, his sleep was feverish, and troubled by turbulent dreams.

However, he was up early, and with an unwonted colour in his cheeks, which his sister ascribed to the country air. After breakfast, he took his way towards Hazeldean, mounted upon a tolerable horse, which he borrowed of a neighbouring farmer who occasionally hunted. Before noon, the garden and terrace of the Casino came in sight. He reined in his horse, and by the little fountain at which Leonard had been wont to eat his radishes and con his book, he saw Riccabocca seated under the shade of the red umbrella. And by the Italian's side stood a form that a Greek of old might have deemed the Naïad of the Fount; for in its youthful beauty there was something so full of poetry—something at once so sweet and so stately—that it spoke to the imagination while it charmed the sense.

Randal dismounted, tied his horse to the gate, and, walking down a trellised alley, came suddenly to the spot. His dark shadow fell over the clear mirror of the fountain just as Riccabocca had said, "All here is so secure from evil!—the waves of the fountain are never troubled like those of the river!" and Violante had answered in her soft native tongue, and lifting her dark, spiritual eyes—"But the fountain would be but a lifeless pool, oh my father, if the spray did not mount towards the skies!"

CHAPTER VII.

RANDAL advanced—"I fear, Signor Riccabocca, that I am guilty of some want of ceremony."

"To dispense with ceremony is the most delicate mode of conferring a compliment," replied the urbane Italian, as he recovered from his first surprise at Randal's sudden address, and extended his hand.

Violante bowed her graceful head to the young man's respectful salutation. "I am on my way to Hazeldean," resumed Randal, "and, seeing you in the garden, could not resist this intrusion."

RICCABOCCA.—"You come from London? Stirring times for you English, but I do not ask you the news. No news can affect us."

RANDAL, (softly.)—"Perhaps—yes."

RICCABOCCA, (startled.)—"How?"

VIOLANTE.—"Surely he speaks of Italy, and news from that country affects you still, my father."

RICCABOCCA.—"Nay, nay, nothing affects me like this country; its east winds might affect a pyramid! Draw your mantle round you, child, and go in; the air has suddenly grown chill."

Violante smiled on her father, glanced uneasily towards Randal's grave brow, and went slowly towards the house.

Riccabocca, after waiting some moments in silence, as if expecting Randal to speak, said with affected carelessness, "So you think that you have news that might affect me? *Corpo di Bacco!* I am curious to learn what!"

"I may be mistaken—that depends on your answer to one question. Do you know the Count of Peschiera?"

Riccabocca winced, and turned pale. He could not baffle the watchful eye of the questioner.

"Enough," said Randal; "I see that I am right. Believe in my sincerity. I speak but to warn and to serve you. The Count seeks to discover the retreat of a countryman and kinsman of his own."

"And for what end?" cried Riccabocca, thrown off his guard, and his breast dilated, his crest rose, and his eye flashed; valour and defiance broke from habitual caution and self-control. "But —pooh!" he added, striving to regain his ordinary and half-ironical calm, "it matters not to me. I grant, sir, that I know the Count di Peschiera; but what has Dr Riccabocca to do with the kinsman of so grand a personage?"

"Dr Riccabocca—nothing. But—" here Randal put his lip close to the Italian's ear, and whispered a brief sentence. Then retreating a step, but laying his hand on the exile's shoulder, he added—"Need I say that your secret is safe with me?"

Riccabocca made no answer. His eyes rested on the ground musingly.

Randal continued—"And I shall esteem it the highest honour you can bestow on me, to be permitted to assist you in forestalling danger."

Riccabocca, (slowly.)—"Sir, I thank you; you have my secret, and I feel assured it is safe, for I speak to an English gentleman. There may be family reasons why I should avoid the Count di Peschiera; and, indeed, he is safest from shoals who steers clearest of his—relations."

The poor Italian regained his caustic smile as he uttered that wise villanous Italian maxim.

Randal.—"I know little of the Count of Peschiera save from the current talk of the world. He is said to hold the estates of a kinsman who took part in a conspiracy against the Austrian power."

Riccabocca.—"It is true. Let that content him; what more does he desire. You spoke of forestalling danger; what danger? I am on the soil of England, and protected by its laws."

RANDAL.—"Allow me to inquire if, had the kinsman no child, the Count di Peschiera would be legitimate and natural heir to the estates he holds?"

RICCABOCCA.—"He would. What then?"

RANDAL.—"Does that thought suggest no danger to the child of the kinsman?"

Riccabocca recoiled, and gasped forth, "The child! You do not mean to imply that this man, infamous though he be, can contemplate the crime of an assassin?"

Randal paused perplexed. His ground was delicate. He knew not what causes of resentment the exile entertained against the Count. He knew not whether Riccabocca would not assent to an alliance that might restore him to his country —and he resolved to feel his way with precaution.

"I did not," said he, smiling gravely, "mean to insinuate so horrible a charge against a man whom I have never seen. He seeks you—that is all I know. I imagine, from his general character, that in this search he consults his interest. Perhaps all matters might be conciliated by an interview!"

"An interview!" exclaimed Riccabocca; "there is but one way we should meet—foot to foot, and hand to hand."

"Is it so? Then you would not listen to the Count if he proposed some amicable compromise—if, for instance, he was a candidate for the hand of your daughter?"

The poor Italian, so wise and so subtle in his talk, was as rash and blind when it came to action, as if he had been born in Ireland, and nourished on potatoes and Repeal. He bared his whole soul to the merciless eye of Randal.

"My daughter!" he exclaimed. "Sir, your very question is an insult."

Randal's way became clear at once. "Forgive me," he said mildly; "I will tell you frankly all that I know. I am acquainted with the Count's sister. I have some little influence over her. It was she who informed me that the Count had come here, bent upon discovering your refuge, and resolved to wed your daughter. This is the danger of which I spoke. And when I asked your permission to aid in forestalling it, I only intended to suggest that it might be wise to find some

securer home, and that I, if permitted to know that home, and to visit you, could apprise you from time to time of the Count's plans and movements."

"Sir, I thank you sincerely," said Riccabocca with emotion; "but am I not safe here?"

"I doubt it. Many people have visited the Squire in the shooting season, who will have heard of you—perhaps seen you, and who are likely to meet the Count in London. And Frank Hazeldean, too, who knows the Count's sister—"

"True, true," interrupted Riccabocca. "I see, I see. I will consider. I will reflect. Meanwhile you are going to Hazeldean. Do not say a word to the Squire. He knows not the secret you have discovered."

With those words Riccabocca turned slightly away, and Randal took the hint to depart.

"At all times command and rely on me," said the young traitor, and he regained the pale to which he had fastened his horse.

As he remounted, he cast his eyes towards the place where he had left Riccabocca. The Italian was still standing there. Presently the form of Jackeymo was seen emerging from the shrubs. Riccabocca turned hastily round, recognised his servant, uttered an exclamation loud enough to reach Randal's ear, and then catching Jackeymo by the arm, disappeared with him amidst the deeper recesses of the garden.

"It will be indeed in my favour," thought Randal as he rode on, "if I can get them into the neighbourhood of London—all occasion there to woo, and if expedient, to win—the heiress."

CHAPTER VIII.

"By the Lord Harry!" cried the Squire, as he stood with his wife in the park, on a visit of inspection to some first-rate South-Downs just added to his stock—"By the Lord, if that is not Randal Leslie trying to get into the park at the back gate! Hollo, Randal! you must come round by the lodge, my boy," said he. "You see this gate is locked, to keep out trespassers."

"A pity," said Randal. "I like short cuts, and you have shut up a very short one."

"So the trespassers said," quoth the Squire; "but Stirn insisted on it;—valuable man, Stirn. But ride round to the lodge. Put up your horse, and you'll join us before we can get to the house."

Randal nodded and smiled, and rode briskly on.

The Squire rejoined his Harry.

"Ah, William," said she anxiously, "though certainly Randal Leslie means well, I always dread his visits."

"So do I, in one sense," quoth the Squire, "for he always carries away a bank-note for Frank."

"I hope he is really Frank's friend," said Mrs Hazeldean.

"Who's else can he be? Not his own, poor fellow, for he will never accept a shilling from me, though his grandmother was as good a Hazeldean as I am. But, zounds, I like his pride, and his economy too. As for Frank—"

"Hush, William!" cried Mrs Hazeldean, and put her fair hand before the Squire's mouth. The Squire was softened, and kissed the fair hand gallantly—perhaps he kissed the lips too: at all events, the worthy pair were walking lovingly arm-in-arm when Randal joined them.

He did not affect to perceive a certain coldness in the manner of Mrs Hazeldean, but began immediately to talk to her about Frank; praise that young gentleman's appearance; expatiate on his health, his popularity, and his good gifts, personal and mental—and this with so much warmth, that any dim and undeveloped suspicions Mrs Hazeldean might have formed soon melted away.

Randal continued to make himself thus agreeable, until the Squire, persuaded that his young kinsman was a first-rate agriculturist, insisted upon carrying him off to the home farm; and Harry turned towards the house, to order Randal's room to be got ready: "For," said Randal, "knowing that you will excuse my morning dress, I venture to invite myself to dine and sleep at the Hall."

On approaching the farm-buildings, Randal was seized with the terror of an impostor; for, despite all the theoretical learning on Bucolics and Georgics with which he had dazzled the Squire, poor Frank, so despised, would have beat him hollow when it came to judging of the points of an ox, or the show of a crop.

"Ha, ha!" cried the Squire, chuckling, "I long to see how you'll astonish Stirn. Why, you'll guess in a moment where we put the top-dressing; and when you come to handle my short-horns, I dare swear you'll know to a pound how much oil-cake has gone into their sides."

"Oh, you do me too much honour—indeed you do. I only know the general principles of agriculture; the details are eminently interesting, but I have not had the opportunity to acquire them."

"Stuff!" cried the Squire. "How can a man know general principles unless he has first studied the details? You are too modest, my boy. Ho! there's Stirn looking out for us!"

Randal saw the grim visage of Stirn peering out of a cattle-shed, and felt undone. He made a desperate rush towards changing the Squire's humour.

"Well, sir, perhaps Frank may soon gratify your wish, and turn farmer himself."

"Eh!" quoth the Squire, stopping short—"what now?"

"Suppose he was to marry?"

"I'd give him the two best farms on the property rent free. Ha, ha! Has he seen the girl yet? I'd leave him free to choose, sir. I chose for myself—every man should. Not but what Miss Stick-torights is an heiress, and, I hear, a very decent girl, and that would join the two properties, and put an end to that lawsuit about the right of way, which began in the reign of King Charles the Second, and is likely otherwise to last till the day of judgment. But never mind her; let Frank choose to please himself."

"I'll not fail to tell him so, sir. I did fear you might have some prejudices. But here we are at the farmyard."

"Burn the farmyard! How can I think of farmyards when you talk of Frank's marriage? Come on—this way. What were you saying about prejudices?"

"Why, you might wish him to marry an Englishwoman, for instance."

"English! Good heavens, sir, does he mean to marry a Hindoo?"

"Nay, I don't know that he means to marry at all: I am only surmising; but if he did fall in love with a foreigner—"

"A foreigner! Ah, then Harry was—" The Squire stopped short.

"Who might, perhaps," observed Randal—not truly if he referred to Madame di Negra—"who might, perhaps, speak very little English?"

"Lord ha' mercy!"

"And a Roman Catholic—"

"Worshipping idols, and roasting people who don't worship them."

"Signor Riccabocca is not so bad as that."

"Rickeybockey! Well, if it was his daughter! But not speak English! and not go to the parish church! By George, if Frank thought of such a thing, I'd cut him off with a shilling. Don't talk to me, sir; I would. I'm a mild man, and an easy man; but when I say a thing, I say it, Mr Leslie. Oh, but it is a jest—you are laughing at me. There's no such painted good-for-nothing creature in Frank's eye—eh?"

"Indeed, sir, if ever I find there is, I will give you notice in time. At present, I was only trying to ascertain what you wished for a daughter-in-law. You said you had no prejudice."

"No more I have—not a bit of it."

"You don't like a foreigner and a Catholic?"

"Who the devil would?"

"But if she had rank and title?"

"Rank and title! Bubble and squeak! No, not half so good as bubble and squeak. English beef and good cabbage. But foreign rank and title!—foreign cabbage and beef!—foreign bubble and foreign squeak!" And the Squire made a wry face, and spat forth his disgust and indignation.

"You must have an Englishwoman?"

"Of course."

"Money?"

"Don't care, provided she is a tidy, sensible, active lass, with a good character for her dower."

"Character—ah, that is indispensable?"

"I should think so, indeed. A Mrs Hazeldean of Hazeldean—You frighten me. He's not going to run off with a divorced woman, or a—"

The Squire stopped, and looked so red in the face, that Randal feared he might be seized with apoplexy before Frank's crimes had made him alter his will.

Therefore he hastened to relieve Mr Hazeldean's mind, and assured him that he had been only talking at random; that Frank was in the habit, indeed, of seeing foreign ladies occasionally, as all persons in the London world were; but that he was sure Frank would never marry without the full consent and approval of his parents. He ended by repeating his assurance, that he would warn the Squire if ever it became necessary. Still, however, he left Mr Hazeldean so disturbed and uneasy that that gentleman forgot all about the farm, and went moodily on in the opposite direction, re-entering the park at its farther extremity. As soon as they approached the house, the Squire hastened to shut himself with his wife in full parental consultation; and Randal, seated upon a bench on the terrace, revolved the mischief he had done, and its chances of success.

While thus seated, and thus thinking, a footstep approached cautiously, and a low voice said, in broken English, "Sare, sare, let me speak vid you."

Randal turned in surprise, and beheld a swarthy saturnine face, with grizzled hair and marked features. He recognised the figure that had joined Riccabocca in the Italian's garden.

"Speak-a you Italian?" resumed Jackeymo.

Randal, who had made himself an excellent linguist, nodded assent; and Jackeymo, rejoiced, begged him to withdraw into a more private part of the grounds.

Randal obeyed, and the two gained the shade of a stately chestnut avenue.

"Sir," then said Jackeymo, speaking in his native tongue, and expressing himself with a certain simple pathos, "I am but a poor man; my name is Giacomo. You have heard of me;—servant to the Signore whom you saw to-day—only a servant; but he honours me with his confidence. We have known danger together; and of all his friends and followers, I alone came with him to the stranger's land."

"Good, faithful fellow," said Randal, examining the man's face, "say on. Your master confides in you? He has confided that which I told him this day?"

"He did. Ah, sir! the Padrone was too proud to ask you to explain more—too proud to show fear of another. But he does fear—he ought to fear—he shall fear," (continued Jackeymo, working himself up to passion)—"for the Padrone has a daughter, and his enemy is a villain. Oh, sir, tell me all that you did not tell to the Padrone. You hinted that this man might wish to marry the Signora. Marry her!—I could cut his throat at the altar!"

"Indeed," said Randal;—"I believe that such is his object."

"But why? He is rich—she is penniless;—no, not quite that, for we have saved—but penniless, compared to him."

"My good friend, I know not yet his motives; but I can easily learn them. If, however, this Count be your master's enemy, it is surely well to guard against him, whatever his designs; and, to do so, you should move into London or its neighbourhood. I fear that, while we speak, the Count may get upon his track."

"He had better not come here!" cried the servant menacingly, and putting his hand where the knife was *not*.

"Beware of your own anger, Giacomo. One act of violence, and you would be transported from England, and your master would lose a friend."

Jackeymo seemed struck by this caution.

"And if the Padrone were to meet him, do you think the Padrone would meekly say, '*Come stà sa Signoria?*' The Padrone would strike him dead!"

"Hush—hush! You speak of what in England is called murder, and is punished by the gallows. If you really love your master, for heaven's sake get him from this place—get him from all chance of such passion and peril. I go to town to-morrow; I will find him a house that shall be safe from all spies—all discovery. And there, too, my friend, I can do—what I cannot at this distance—watch over him, and keep watch also on his enemy."

Jackeymo seized Randal's hand, and lifted it towards his lip; then, as if struck by a sudden suspicion, dropped the hand, and said bluntly—"Signore, I think you have seen the Padrone twice. Why do you take this interest in him?"

"Is it so uncommon to take interest even in a stranger who is menaced by some peril?"

Jackeymo, who believed little in general philanthropy, shook his head sceptically.

"Besides," continued Randal, suddenly bethinking himself of a more plausible reason—"besides, I am a friend and connection of Mr Egerton; and Mr Egerton's most intimate friend is Lord L'Estrange; and I have heard that Lord L'Estrange—"

"The good Lord! Oh, now I understand," interrupted Jackeymo, and his brow cleared. "Ah, if *he* were in England! But you will let us know when he comes?"

"Certainly. Now, tell me, Giacomo, is this Count really unprincipled and dangerous? Remember, I know him not personally."

"He has neither heart, head, nor conscience."

"That makes him dangerous to men; but to women, danger comes from other qualities. Could it be possible, if he obtained

any interview with the Signora, that he could win her affections?"

Jackeymo crossed himself rapidly, and made no answer.

"I have heard that he is still very handsome."

Jackeymo groaned.

Randal resumed—"Enough; persuade the Padrone to come to town."

"But if the Count is in town?"

"That makes no difference; the safest place is always the largest city. Everywhere else, a foreigner is in himself an object of attention and curiosity."

"True."

"Let your master, then, come to London, or rather, into its neighbourhood. He can reside in one of the suburbs most remote from the Count's haunts. In two days I will have found him a lodging and write to him. You trust to me now?"

"I do indeed—I do, Excellency. Ah, if the Signorina were married, we would not care!"

"Married! But she looks so high!"

"Alas! not now—not here!"

Randal sighed heavily. Jackeymo's eyes sparkled. He thought he had detected a new motive for Randal's interest—a motive to an Italian the most natural, the most laudable of all.

"Find the house, Signore—write to the Padrone. He shall come. I'll talk to him. I can manage him. Holy San Giacomo, bestir thyself now—'tis long since I troubled thee!"

Jackeymo strode off through the fading trees, smiling and muttering as he went.

The first dinner-bell rang, and, on entering the drawing-room, Randal found Parson Dale and his wife, who had been invited in haste to meet the unexpected visitor.

The preliminary greetings over, Mr Dale took the opportunity afforded by the Squire's absence to inquire after the health of Mr Egerton.

"He is always well," said Randal. "I believe he is made of of iron."

"His heart is of gold," said the Parson.

"Ah," said Randal, inquisitively, "you told me you had come

in contact with him once, respecting, I think, some of your old parishioners at Lansmere?"

The parson nodded, and there was a moment's silence.

"Do you remember your battle by the Stocks, Mr Leslie?" said Mr Dale, with a good-humoured laugh.

"Indeed, yes. By the way, now you speak of it, I met my old opponent in London the first year I went up to it."

"You did!—where?"

"At a literary scamp's—a cleverish man called Burley."

"Burley! I have seen some burlesque verses in Greek by a Mr Burley."

"No doubt, the same person. He has disappeared—gone to the dogs, I dare say. Burlesque Greek is not a knowledge very much in power at present."

"Well, but Leonard Fairfield?—you have seen him since?"

"No."

"Nor heard of him?"

"No!—have you?"

"Strange to say, not for a long time. But I have reason to believe that he must be doing well."

"You surprise me! Why?"

"Because, two years ago, he sent for his mother. She went to him."

"Is that all?"

"It is enough; for he would not have sent for her if he could not maintain her."

Here the Hazeldeans entered, arm-in-arm, and the fat butler announced dinner.

The Squire was unusually taciturn—Mrs Hazeldean thoughtful—Mrs Dale languid, and headachy. The Parson, who seldom enjoyed the luxury of converse with a scholar, save when he quarrelled with Dr Riccabocca, was animated, by Randal's repute for ability, into a great desire for argument.

"A glass of wine, Mr Leslie. You were saying, before dinner, that burlesque Greek is not a knowledge very much in power at present. Pray, sir, what knowledge is in power?"

RANDAL, (laconically.)—"Practical knowledge."

PARSON.—"What of?"

RANDAL.—"Men."

PARSON, (candidly.)—"Well, I suppose that is the most available sort of knowledge, in a worldly point of view. How does one learn it? Do books help?"

RANDAL.—"According as they are read, they help or injure."

PARSON.—"How should they be read in order to help?"

RANDAL.—"Read specially to apply to purposes that lead to power."

PARSON, (very much struck with Randal's pithy and Spartan logic.)—"Upon my word, sir, you express yourself very well. I must own that I began these questions in the hope of differing from you; for I like an argument."

"That he does," growled the Squire; "the most contradictory creature!"

PARSON.—"Argument is the salt of talk. But now I am afraid I must agree with you, which I was not at all prepared for."

Randal bowed and answered—"No two men of our education can dispute upon the application of knowledge."

PARSON, (pricking up his ears.)—"Eh?—what to?"

RANDAL.—"Power, of course."

PARSON, (overjoyed.)—"Power!—the vulgarest application of it, or the loftiest? But you mean the loftiest?"

RANDAL, (in his turn interested and interrogative.)—"What do you call the loftiest, and what the vulgarest?"

PARSON.—"The vulgarest, self-interest; the loftiest, beneficence."

Randal suppressed the half disdainful smile that rose to his lip.

"You speak, sir, as a clergyman should do. I admire your sentiment, and adopt it; but I fear that the knowledge which aims only at beneficence very rarely in this world gets any power at all."

SQUIRE, (seriously.)—"That's true; I never get my own way when I want to do a kindness, and Stirn always gets his when he insists on something diabolically brutal and harsh."

PARSON.—"Pray, Mr Leslie, what does intellectual power refined to the utmost, but entirely stripped of beneficence, most resemble?"

RANDAL.—"Resemble?—I can hardly say. Some very great man—almost any very great man—who has baffled all his foes, and attained all his ends."

PARSON.—"I doubt if any man has ever become very great who has not meant to be beneficent, though he might err in the means. Cæsar was naturally beneficent, and so was Alexander. But intellectual power refined to the utmost, and wholly void of beneficence, resembles only one being, and that, sir, is the Principle of Evil."

RANDAL, (startled.)—"Do you mean the Devil?"

PARSON.—"Yes, sir—the Devil; and even he, sir, did not succeed! Even he, sir, is what your great men would call a most decided failure."

MRS DALE.—"My dear—my dear!"

PARSON.—"Our religion proves it, my love; he was an angel, and he fell."

There was a solemn pause. Randal was more impressed than he liked to own to himself. By this time the dinner was over, and the servants had retired. Harry glanced at Carry. Carry smoothed her gown and rose.

The gentlemen remained over their wine; and the Parson, satisfied with what he deemed a clencher upon his favourite subject of discussion, changed the subject to lighter topics, till, happening to fall upon tithes, the Squire struck in, and by dint of loudness of voice, and truculence of brow, fairly overwhelmed both his guests, and proved to his own satisfaction that tithes were an unjust and unchristianlike usurpation on the part of the Church generally, and a most especial and iniquitous infliction upon the Hazeldean estates in particular.

CHAPTER IX.

On entering the drawing-room, Randal found the two ladies seated close together, in a position much more appropriate to the familiarity of their school-days, than to the politeness of the friendship now existing between them. Mrs Hazeldean's hand hung affectionately over Carry's shoulder, and both those fair English faces were bent over the same book. It was pretty to see these sober matrons, so different from each other in character and aspect, thus unconsciously restored to the intimacy of happy maiden youth by the golden link of some Magician from the still land of Truth or Fancy—brought together in heart, as each eye rested on the same thought;—closer and closer, as sympathy, lost in the actual world, grew out of that world which unites in one bond of feeling the readers of some gentle book.

"And what work interests you so much?" said Randal, pausing by the table.

"One you have read, of course," replied Mrs Dale, putting a book-mark embroidered by herself into the page, and handing the volume to Randal. "It has made a great sensation, I believe."

Randal glanced at the title of the work. "True, said he, "I have heard much of it in London, but I have not yet had time to read it."

Mrs Dale.—"I can lend it to you, if you like to look over it to-night, and you can leave it for me with Mrs Hazeldean."

Parson, (approaching.)—"Oh! that book!—yes, you must read it. I do not know a work more instructive."

Randal.—"Instructive! Certainly I will read it then. But

I thought it was a mere work of amusement—of fancy. It seems so, as I look over it."

PARSON.—"So is the *Vicar of Wakefield;* yet what book more instructive?"

RANDAL.—"I should not have said *that* of the *Vicar of Wakefield.* A pretty book enough, though the story is most improbable. But how is it instructive?"

PARSON.—"By its results: it leaves us happier and better. What can any instruction do more? Some works instruct through the head, some through the heart. The last reach the widest circle, and often produce the most genial influence on the character. This book belongs to the last. You will grant my proposition when you have read it."

Randal smiled and took the volume.

MRS DALE.—"Is the author known yet?"

RANDAL.—"I have heard it ascribed to many writers, but I believe no one has claimed it."

PARSON.—"I think it must have been written by my old college friend, Professor Moss, the naturalist—its descriptions of scenery are so accurate."

MRS DALE.—"La, Charles dear! that snuffy, tiresome, prosy professor? How can you talk such nonsense? I am sure the author must be young—there is so much freshness of feeling."

MRS HAZELDEAN, (positively.)—"Yes, certainly young."

PARSON, (no less positively.)—"I should say just the contrary. Its tone is too serene, and its style too simple, for a young man. Besides, I don't know any young man who would send me his book, and this book has been sent me—very handsomely bound too, you see. Depend upon it, Moss is the man—quite his turn of mind."

MRS DALE.—"You are too provoking, Charles dear! Mr Moss is so remarkably plain, too."

RANDAL.—"Must an author be handsome?"

PARSON.—"Ha, ha! Answer that, if you can, Carry."

Carry remained mute and disdainful.

SQUIRE, (with great *naïveté.*)—"Well, I don't think there's much in the book, whoever wrote it; for I've read it myself, and understand every word of it."

MRS DALE.—"I don't see why you should suppose it was written by a man at all. For my part, I think it must be a woman."

MRS HAZELDEAN.—"Yes, there's a passage about maternal affection, which only a woman could have written."

PARSON.—"Pooh, pooh! I should like to see a woman who could have written that description of an August evening before a thunderstorm; every wildflower in the hedgerow exactly the flowers of August—every sign in the air exactly those of the month. Bless you! a woman would have filled the hedge with violets and cowslips. Nobody else but my friend Moss could have written that description."

SQUIRE.—"I don't know; there's a simile about the waste of corn-seed in hand-sowing, which makes me think he must be a farmer!"

MRS DALE, (scornfully.)—"A farmer! In hobnailed shoes, I suppose! I say it is a woman."

MRS HAZELDEAN.—"A WOMAN, and A MOTHER!"

PARSON.—"A middle-aged man, and a naturalist."

SQUIRE.—"No, no, Parson—certainly a young man; for that love-scene puts me in mind of my own young days, when I would have given my ears to tell Harry how handsome I thought her; and all I could say was, 'Fine weather for the crops, Miss.' Yes, a young man, and a farmer. I should not wonder if he had held the plough himself."

RANDAL, (who had been turning over the pages.)—"This sketch of Night in London comes from a man who has lived the life of cities, and looked at wealth with the eyes of poverty. Not bad! I will read the book."

"Strange," said the Parson, smiling, "that this little work should so have entered into our minds, suggested to all of us different ideas, yet equally charmed all—given a new and fresh current to our dull country life—animated us as with the sight of a world in our breasts we had never seen before, save in dreams; a little work like this, by a man we don't know, and never may! Well, *that* knowledge *is* power, and a noble one!"

"A sort of power, certainly, sir," said Randal, candidly; and that night, when Randal retired to his own room, he suspended

his schemes and projects, and read, as he rarely did, without an object to gain by the reading.

The work surprised him by the pleasure it gave. Its charm lay in the writer's calm enjoyment of the Beautiful. It seemed like some happy soul sunning itself in the light of its own thoughts. Its power was so tranquil and even, that it was only a critic who could perceive how much force and vigour were necessary to sustain the wing that floated aloft with so imperceptible an effort. There was no one faculty predominating tyrannically over the others; all seemed proportioned in the felicitous symmetry of a nature rounded, integral, and complete. And when the work was closed, it left behind it a tender warmth that played round the heart of the reader, and vivified feelings which seemed unknown before. Randal laid down the book softly; and for five minutes the ignoble and base purposes to which his own knowledge was applied, stood before him, naked and unmasked.

"Tut!" said he, wrenching himself violently away from the benign influence, "it was not to sympathise with Hector, but to conquer with Achilles, that Alexander of Macedon kept Homer under his pillow. Such should be the true use of books to him who has the practical world to subdue; let parsons and women construe it otherwise, as they may!"

And the Principle of Evil descended again upon the intellect, from which the guide of Beneficence was gone.

CHAPTER X.

RANDAL rose at the sound of the first breakfast bell, and on the staircase met Mrs Hazeldean. He gave her back the book; and as he was about to speak, she beckoned to him to follow her into a little morning-room appropriated to herself. No boudoir of white and gold, with pictures by Watteau, but lined with large walnut-tree presses, that held the old heir-loom linen strewed with lavender—stores for the housekeeper, and medicines for the poor.

Seating herself on a large chair in this sanctum, Mrs Hazeldean looked formidably at home.

"Pray," said the lady, coming at once to the point, with her usual straightforward candour, "what is all this you have been saying to my husband as to the possibility of Frank's marrying a foreigner?"

RANDAL.—"Would you be as averse to such a notion as Mr Hazeldean is?"

MRS HAZELDEAN.—"You ask me a question, instead of answering mine."

Randal was greatly put out in his fence by these rude thrusts. For indeed he had a double purpose to serve—first, thoroughly to know if Frank's marriage with a woman like Madame di Negra would irritate the Squire sufficiently to endanger the son's inheritance; and, secondly, to prevent Mr and Mrs Hazeldean believing seriously that such a marriage was to be apprehended, lest they should prematurely address Frank on the subject, and frustrate the marriage itself. Yet, withal, he must so express himself, that he could not be afterwards accused by the parents of disguising matters. In his talk to the Squire

the preceding day, he had gone a little too far—farther than he would have done but for his desire of escaping the cattle-shed and short-horns. While he mused, Mrs Hazeldean observed him with her honest sensible eyes, and finally exclaimed—

"Out with it, Mr Leslie!"

"Out with what, my dear madam? The Squire has sadly exaggerated the importance of what was said mainly in jest. But I will own to you plainly, that Frank has appeared to me a little smitten with a certain fair Italian."

"Italian!" cried Mrs Hazeldean. "Well, I said so from the first. Italian!—that's all, is it?" and she smiled.

Randal was more and more perplexed. The pupil of his eye contracted, as it does when we retreat into ourselves, and think, watch, and keep guard.

"And perhaps," resumed Mrs Hazeldean, with a very sunny expression of countenance, "you have noticed this in Frank since he was here?"

"It is true," murmured Randal; "but I think his heart or his fancy was touched even before."

"Very natural," said Mrs Hazeldean; "how could he help it?—such a beautiful creature! Well, I must not ask you to tell Frank's secrets; but I guess the object of attraction; and though she will have no fortune to speak of—and it is not such a match as he might form—still she is so amiable, and has been so well brought up, and is so little like one's general notions of a Roman Catholic, that I think I could persuade Hazeldean into giving his consent."

"Ah!" said Randal, drawing a long breath, and beginning with his practised acuteness to detect Mrs Hazeldean's error, "I am very much relieved and rejoiced to hear this; and I may venture to give Frank some hope, if I find him disheartened and desponding, poor fellow!"

"I think you may," replied Mrs Hazeldean, laughing pleasantly. "But you should not have frightened poor William so, hinting that the lady knew very little English. She has an accent, to be sure; but she speaks our tongue very prettily. I always forget that she's not English born! Ha, ha, poor William!"

RANDAL.—"Ha, ha!"

MRS HAZELDEAN.—"We had once thought of another match for Frank—a girl of good English family."

RANDAL.—"Miss Sticktorights?"

MRS HAZELDEAN.—"No; that's an old whim of Hazeldean's. But I doubt if the Sticktorights would ever merge their property in ours. Bless you, it would be all off the moment they came to settlements, and had to give up the right of way. We thought of a very different match; but there's no dictating to young hearts, Mr Leslie."

RANDAL.—"Indeed no, Mrs Hazeldean. But since we now understand each other so well, excuse me if I suggest that you had better leave things to themselves, and not write to Frank on the subject. Young hearts, you know, are often stimulated by apparent difficulties, and grow cool when the obstacle vanishes."

MRS HAZELDEAN.—"Very possibly; it was not so with Hazeldean and me. But I shall not write to Frank on the subject, for a different reason—though I would consent to the match, and so would William; yet we both would rather, after all, that Frank married an Englishwoman, and a Protestant. We will not, therefore, do anything to encourage the idea. But if Frank's happiness becomes really at stake, *then* we will step in. In short, we would neither encourage nor oppose. You understand?"

"Perfectly."

"And, in the meanwhile, it is quite right that Frank should see the world, and try to distract his mind, or at least to know it. And I dare say it has been some thought of that kind which has prevented his coming here."

Randal, dreading a farther and plainer *éclaircissement*, now rose, and saying, "Pardon me, but I must hurry over breakfast, and be back in time to catch the coach"—offered his arm to his hostess, and led her into the breakfast-parlour. Devouring his meal, as if in great haste, he then mounted his horse, and, taking cordial leave of his entertainers, trotted briskly away.

All things favoured his project—even chance had befriended him in Mrs Hazeldean's mistake. She had, not unnaturally,

supposed Violante to have captivated Frank on his last visit to the Hall. Thus, while Randal had certified his own mind that nothing could more exasperate the Squire than an alliance with Madame di Negra, he could yet assure Frank that Mrs Hazeldean was all on his side. And when the error was discovered, Mrs Hazeldean would only have to blame herself for it. Still more successful had his diplomacy proved with the Riccaboccas: he had ascertained the secret he had come to discover; he should induce the Italian to remove to the neighbourhood of London; and if Violante were the great heiress he suspected her to prove, whom else of her own age would she see but him? And the old Leslie domains, to be sold in two years—a portion of the dowry might purchase them! Flushed by the triumph of his craft, all former vacillations of conscience ceased. In high and fervent spirits he passed the Casino, the garden of which was solitary and deserted, reached his home, and, telling Oliver to be studious, and Juliet to be patient, walked thence to meet the coach and regain the capital.

CHAPTER XI.

Violante was seated in her own little room, and looking from the window on the terrace that stretched below. The day was warm for the time of year. The orange-trees had been removed under shelter for the approach of winter; but where they had stood sate Mrs Riccabocca at work. In the Belvidere, Riccabocca himself was conversing with his favourite servant. But the casements and the door of the Belvidere were open; and where they sate, both wife and daughter could see the Padrone leaning against the wall, with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the floor; while Jackeymo, with one finger on his master's arm, was talking to him with visible earnestness. And the daughter from the window, and the wife from her work, directed tender anxious eyes towards the still thoughtful form so dear to both. For the last day or two, Riccabocca had been peculiarly abstracted, even to gloom. Each felt there was something stirring at his heart —neither, as yet, knew what.

Violante's room silently revealed the nature of the education by which her character had been formed. Save a sketch-book which lay open on a desk at hand, and which showed talent exquisitely taught, (for in this Riccabocca had been her teacher,) there was nothing that spoke of the ordinary female accomplishments. No piano stood open, no harp occupied yon nook, which seemed made for one; no broidery-frame, nor implements of work, betrayed the usual and graceful resources of a girl; but ranged on shelves against the wall were the best writers in English, Italian, and French; and these betokened an extent of reading, that he who wishes for a companion to his mind in the sweet commune of woman, which softens and refines all it gives

and takes in interchange, will never condemn as masculine. You had but to look into Violante's face to see how noble was the intelligence that brought soul to those lovely features. Nothing hard, nothing dry and stern was there. Even as you detected knowledge, it was lost in the gentleness of grace. In fact, whatever she gained in the graver kinds of information, became transmuted, through her heart and her fancy, into spiritual golden stores. Give her some tedious and arid history, her imagination seized upon beauties other readers had passed by, and, like the eye of the artist, detected everywhere the Picturesque. Something in her mind seemed to reject all that was mean and commonplace, and to bring out all that was rare and elevated in whatever it received. Living so apart from all companions of her age, she scarcely belonged to the Present time. She dwelt in the Past, as Sabrina in her crystal well. Images of chivalry—of the Beautiful and the Heroic—such as, in reading the silvery line of Tasso, rise before us, softening force and valour into love and song—haunted the reveries of the fair Italian maid.

Tell us not that the Past, examined by cold Philosophy, was no better and no loftier than the Present; it is not thus seen by pure and generous eyes. Let the Past perish, when it ceases to reflect on its magic mirror the beautiful Romance which is its noblest reality, though perchance but the shadow of Delusion.

Yet Violante was not merely the dreamer. In her, life was so puissant and rich, that action seemed necessary to its glorious development—action, but still in the woman's sphere—action to bless and to refine and to exalt all around her, and to pour whatever else of ambition was left unsatisfied into sympathy with the aspirations of man. Despite her father's fears of the bleak air of England, in that air she had strengthened the delicate health of her childhood. Her elastic step—her eyes full of sweetness and light—her bloom, at once soft and luxuriant—all spoke of the vital powers fit to sustain a mind of such exquisite mould, and the emotions of a heart that, once aroused, could ennoble the passions of the South with the purity and devotion of the North.

Solitude makes some natures more timid, some more bold. Violante was fearless. When she spoke, her eyes frankly met your own; and she was so ignorant of evil, that as yet she seemed nearly unacquainted with shame. From this courage, combined with affluence of idea, came a delightful flow of happy converse. Though possessing so imperfectly the accomplishments ordinarily taught to young women, and which may be cultured to the utmost, and yet leave the thoughts so barren, and the talk so vapid—she had that accomplishment which most pleases the taste, and commands the love, of the man of talent; especially if his talent be not so actively employed as to make him desire only relaxation where he seeks companionship—the accomplishment of facility in intellectual interchange—the charm that clothes in musical words beautiful womanly ideas.

"I hear him sigh at this distance," said Violante, softly, as she still watched her father; "and methinks this is a new grief, and not for his country. He spoke twice yesterday of that dear English friend, and wished that he were here,"

As she said this, unconsciously the virgin blushed, her hands drooped on her knee, and she fell herself into thought as profound as her father's, but less gloomy. From her arrival in England, Violante had been taught a grateful interest in the name of Harley L'Estrange. Her father, preserving a silence, that seemed disdain, of all his old Italian intimates, had been pleased to converse with open heart of the Englishman who had saved where countrymen had betrayed. He spoke of the soldier, then in the full bloom of youth, who, unconsoled by fame, had nursed the memory of some hidden sorrow amidst the pine-trees that cast their shadow over the sunny Italian lake; how Riccabocca, then honoured and happy, had courted from his seclusion the English Signore, then the mourner and the voluntary exile; how they had grown friends amidst the landscapes in which her eyes had opened to the day; how Harley had vainly warned him from the rash schemes in which he had sought to reconstruct in an hour the ruins of weary ages; how, when abandoned, deserted, proscribed, pursued, he had fled for life—the infant Violante clasped to his bosom—the English soldier had given him refuge, baffled the pursuers, armed his servants, accom-

panied the fugitive at night towards the defile in the Apennines, and, when the emissaries of a perfidious enemy, hot in the chase, came near, had said, "You have your child to save! Fly on! Another league, and you are beyond the borders. We will delay the foes with parley; they will not harm us." And not till escape was gained did the father know that the English friend had delayed the foe, not by parley, but by the sword, holding the pass against numbers, with a breast as dauntless as Bayard's on the glorious bridge.

And since then, the same Englishman had never ceased to vindicate his name, to urge his cause; and if hope yet remained of restoration to land and honours, it was in that untiring zeal.

Hence, naturally and insensibly, this secluded and musing girl had associated all that she read in tales of romance and chivalry with the image of the brave and loyal stranger. He it was who animated her dreams of the Past, and seemed born to be, in the destined hour, the deliverer of the Future. Around this image grouped all the charms that the fancy of virgin woman can raise from the enchanted lore of old Heroic Fable. Once in her early girlhood, her father (to satisfy her curiosity, eager for general description) had drawn from memory a sketch of the features of the Englishman—drawn Harley, as he was in that first youth, flattered and idealised, no doubt, by art, and by partial gratitude—but still resembling him as he was then; while the deep mournfulness of recent sorrow yet shadowed and concentrated all the varying expressions of his countenance; and to look on him was to say—"So sad, yet so young!" Never did Violante pause to remember that the same years which ripened herself from infancy into woman, were passing less gently over that smooth cheek and dreamy brow—that the world might be altering the nature as time the aspect. To her the hero of the Ideal remained immortal in bloom and youth. Bright illusion, common to us all, where Poetry once hallows the human form! Who ever thinks of Petrarch as the old time-worn man? Who does not see him as when he first gazed on Laura?—

"Ogni altra cosa ogni pensier va fore;
E sol ivi con voi rimansi Amore!"

CHAPTER XII.

And Violante, thus absorbed in reverie, forgot to keep watch on the Belvidere. And the Belvidere was now deserted. The wife, who had no other ideal to distract *her* thoughts, saw Riccabocca pass into the house.

The exile entered his daughter's room, and she started to feel his hand upon her locks and his kiss upon her brow.

"My child!" cried Riccabocca, seating himself, "I have resolved to leave for a time this retreat, and to seek the neighbourhood of London."

"Ah, dear father, *that*, then, was your thought? But what can be your reason? Do not turn away; you know how carefully I have obeyed your command and kept your secret. Ah, you will confide in me."

"I do, indeed," returned Riccabocca, with emotion. "I leave this place, in the fear lest my enemies discover me. I shall say to others that you are of an age to require teachers, not to be obtained here. But I should like none to know where we go."

The Italian said these last words through his teeth, and hanging his head. He said them in shame.

"My mother—(So Violante always called Jemima)—my mother—you have spoken to her?"

"Not yet. *There* is the difficulty."

"No difficulty, for she loves you so well," replied Violante, with soft reproach. "Ah, why not also confide in her? Who so true? so good?"

"Good—I grant it!" exclaimed Riccabocca. "What then? '*Da cattiva Donna guardati, ed alla buona non fidar niente,*'

(from the bad woman, guard thyself; to the good woman trust nothing.) And if you must trust," added the abominable man, "trust her with anything but a secret!"

"Fie," said Violante, with arch reproach, for she knew her father's humours too well to interpret his horrible sentiments literally—"fie on your consistency, *Padre carissimo*. Do you not trust your secret to me?"

"You! A kitten is not a cat, and a girl is not a woman. Besides, the secret was already known to you, and I had no choice. Peace, Jemima will stay here for the present. See to what you wish to take with you; we shall leave to-night."

Not waiting for an answer, Riccabocca hurried away, and with a firm step strode the terrace and approached his wife.

"*Anima mia*," said the pupil of Machiavel, disguising in the tenderest words the cruellest intentions—for one of his most cherished Italian proverbs was to the effect, that there is no getting on with a mule or a woman unless you coax them—"*Anima mia*, soul of my being—you have already seen that Violante mopes herself to death here."

"She, poor child! Oh no!"

"She does, core of my heart—she does, and is as ignorant of music as I am of tent-stitch."

"She sings beautifully."

"Just as birds do, against all the rules, and in defiance of gamut. Therefore, to come to the point, O treasure of my soul! I am going to take her with me for a short time, perhaps to Cheltenham, or Brighton—we shall see."

"All places with you are the same to me, Alphonso. When shall we go?"

"*We* shall go to-night; but, terrible as it is to part from you—you—"

"Ah!" interrupted the wife, and covered her face with her hands.

Riccabocca, the wiliest and most relentless of men in his maxims, melted into absolute uxorial imbecility at the sight of that mute distress. He put his arm round his wife's waist, with genuine affection, and without a single proverb at his heart—"*Carissima*, do not grieve so; we shall be back soon,

and travelling is expensive; rolling stones gather no moss, and there is so much to see to at home."

Mrs Riccabocca gently escaped from her husband's arm. She withdrew her hands from her face, and brushed away the tears that stood in her eyes.

"Alphonso," she said touchingly, "hear me! What you think good, that shall ever be good to me. But do not think that I grieve solely because of our parting. No; I grieve to think that, despite all these years in which I have been the partner of your hearth and slept on your breast—all these years in which I have had no thought but, however humbly, to do my duty to you and yours, and could have wished that you had read my heart, and seen there but yourself and your child—I grieve to think that you still deem me as unworthy your trust as when you stood by my side at the altar."

"Trust!" repeated Riccabocca, startled and conscience-stricken; "why do you say 'trust?' In what have I distrusted you? I am sure," he continued, with the artful volubility of guilt, "that I never doubted your fidelity—hook-nosed, long-visaged foreigner though I be; never pryed into your letters; never inquired into your solitary walks; never heeded your flirtations with that good-looking Parson Dale; never kept the money; and never looked into the account-books!" Mrs Riccabocca refused even a smile of contempt at these revolting evasions; nay, she seemed scarcely to hear them.

"Can you think," she resumed, pressing her hand on her heart to still its struggles for relief in sobs—"can you think that I could have watched, and thought, and taxed my poor mind so constantly, to conjecture what might best soothe or please you, and not seen, long since, that you have secrets known to your daughter—your servant—not to me? Fear not—the secrets cannot be evil, or you would not tell them to your innocent child. Besides, do I not know your nature? and do I not love you because I know it?—it is for something connected with those secrets that you leave your home. You think that I should be incautious—imprudent. You will not take

me with you. Be it so. I go to prepare for your departure. Forgive me if I have displeased you, husband."

Mrs Riccabocca turned away; but a soft hand touched the Italian's arm. "O father, can you resist this? Trust her!—trust her! I am a woman like her! I answer for her woman's faith. Be yourself—ever nobler than all others, my own father."

"*Diavolo!* Never one door shuts but another opens," groaned Riccabocca. "Are you a fool, child? Don't you see that it was for your sake only I feared—and would be cautious?"

"For mine! O then, do not make me deem myself mean, and the cause of meanness. For mine! Am I not your daughter—the descendant of men who never feared?"

Violante looked sublime while she spoke; and as she ended she led her father gently on towards the door, which his wife had now gained.

"Jemima—wife mine!—pardon, pardon," cried the Italian, whose heart had been yearning to repay such tenderness and devotion,—"come back to my breast—it has been long closed—it shall be open to you now and for ever."

In another moment the wife was in her right place—on her husband's bosom; and Violante, beautiful peacemaker, stood smiling awhile at both, and then lifted her eyes gratefully to heaven, and stole away.

CHAPTER XIII.

On Randal's return to town, he heard mixed and contradictory rumours in the streets, and at the clubs, of the probable downfall of the Government at the approaching session of Parliament. These rumours had sprung up suddenly, as if in an hour. True that, for some time, the sagacious had shaken their heads and said, "Ministers could not last." True that certain changes in policy, a year or two before, had divided the party on which the Government depended, and strengthened that which opposed it. But still the more important members of that Government had been so long identified with official station, and there seemed so little power in the Opposition to form a cabinet of names familiar to official ears, that the general public had anticipated, at most, a few partial changes. Rumour now went far beyond this. Randal, whose whole prospects at present were but reflections from the greatness of his patron, was alarmed. He sought Egerton, but the minister was impenetrable, and seemed calm, confident, and imperturbed. Somewhat relieved, Randal then set himself to work to find a safe home for Riccabocca; for the greater need to succeed in obtaining fortune there, if he failed in getting it through Egerton. He found a quiet house, detached and secluded, in the neighbourhood of Norwood. No vicinity more secure from espionage and remark. He wrote to Riccabocca, and communicated the address, adding fresh assurances of his own power to be of use. The next morning he was seated in his office, thinking very little of the details, that he mastered, however, with mechanical precision, when the minister who presided over that department of the public service sent for him into his

private room, and begged him to take a letter to Egerton, with whom he wished to consult relative to a very important point to be decided in the Cabinet that day. "I want you to take it," said the minister smiling, (the minister was a frank, homely man,) "because you are in Mr Egerton's confidence, and he may give you some verbal message besides a written reply. Egerton is often *over* cautious and brief in the *litera scripta*."

Randal went first to Egerton's neighbouring office—he had not been there that day. He then took a cabriolet and drove to Grosvenor Square. A quiet-looking chariot was at the door. Mr Egerton was at home; but the servant said, "Dr F. is with him, sir; and perhaps he may not like to be disturbed."

"What—is your master ill?"

"Not that I know of, sir. He never says he is ill. But he has looked poorly the last day or two."

Randal hesitated a moment; but his commission might be important, and Egerton was a man who so held the maxim, that health and all else must give way to business, that he resolved to enter; and, unannounced, and unceremoniously, as was his wont, he opened the door of the library. He started as he did so. Audley Egerton was leaning back on the sofa, and the doctor, on his knees before him, was applying the stethoscope to his breast. Egerton's eyes were partially closed as the door opened. But at the noise he sprang up, nearly oversetting the doctor. "Who's that?—How dare you!" he exclaimed, in a voice of great anger. Then recognising Randal, he changed colour, bit his lip, and muttered drily, "I beg pardon for my abruptness; what do you want, Mr Leslie?"

"This letter from Lord ——; I was told to deliver it immediately into your own hands; I beg pardon—"

"There is no cause," said Egerton, coldly. "I have had a slight attack of bronchitis; and as Parliament meets so soon, I must take advice from my doctor, if I would be heard by the reporters. Lay the letter on the table, and be kind enough to wait for my reply."

Randal withdrew. He had never seen a physician in that house before, and it seemed surprising that Egerton should even take a medical opinion upon a slight attack. While waiting in

the ante-room there was a knock at the street door, and presently a gentleman, exceedingly well dressed, was shown in, and honoured Randal with an easy and half-familiar bow. Randal remembered to have met this personage at dinner, and at the house of a young nobleman of high fashion, but had not been introduced to him, and did not even know him by name. The visitor was better informed.

"Our friend Egerton is busy, I hear, Mr Leslie," said he, arranging the camelia in his button-hole.

"Our friend Egerton!" It must be a very great man to say, "Our friend Egerton."

"He will not be engaged long, I dare say," returned Randal, glancing his shrewd inquiring eye over the stranger's person.

"I trust not; my time is almost as precious as his own. I was not so fortunate as to be presented to you when we met at Lord Spendquick's. Good fellow, Spendquick; and decidedly clever."

Lord Spendquick was usually esteemed a gentleman without three ideas.

Randal smiled.

In the meanwhile the visitor had taken out a card from an embossed morocco case, and now presented it to Randal, who read theron, "Baron Levy, No. —, Bruton St."

The name was not unknown to Randal. It was a name too often on the lips of men of fashion not to have reached the ears of an *habitué* of good society.

Mr Levy had been a solicitor by profession. He had of late years relinquished his ostensible calling; and not long since, in consequence of some services towards the negotiation of a loan, had been created a baron by one of the German kings. The wealth of Mr Levy was said to be only equalled by his good nature to all who were in want of a temporary loan, and with sound expectations of repaying it some day or other.

You seldom saw a finer-looking man than Baron Levy—about the same age as Egerton, but looking younger: so well preserved—such magnificent black whiskers—such superb teeth! Despite his name and his dark complexion, he did not, however, resemble a Jew—at least externally; and, in fact, he

was not a Jew on the father's side, but the natural son of a rich English *grand seigneur*, by a Hebrew lady of distinction—in the opera. After his birth, this lady had married a German trader of her own persuasion, and her husband had been prevailed upon, for the convenience of all parties, to adopt his wife's son, and accord to him his own Hebrew name. Mr Levy senior was soon left a widower, and then the real father, though never actually owning the boy, had shown him great attention—had him frequently at his house — initiated him betimes into his own high-born society, for which the boy showed great taste. But when my Lord died, and left but a moderate legacy to the younger Levy, who was then about eighteen, that ambiguous person was articled to an attorney by his putative sire, who shortly afterwards returned to his native land, and was buried at Prague, where his tombstone may yet be seen. Young Levy, however, contrived to do very well without him. His real birth was generally known, and rather advantageous to him in a social point of view. His legacy enabled him to become a partner where he had been a clerk, and his practice became great amongst the fashionable classes of society. Indeed he was so useful, so pleasant, so much a man of the world, that he grew intimate with his clients—chiefly young men of rank; was on good terms with both Jew and Christian; and being neither one nor the other, resembled (to use Sheridan's incomparable simile) the blank page between the Old and the New Testament.

Vulgar, some might call Mr Levy, from his assurance, but it was not the vulgarity of a man accustomed to low and coarse society—rather the *mauvais ton* of a person not sure of his own position, but who has resolved to swagger into the best one he can get. When it is remembered that he had made his way in the world, and gleaned together an immense fortune, it is needless to add that he was as sharp as a needle, and as hard as a flint. No man had had more friends, and no man had stuck by them more firmly—so long as there was a pound in their pockets!

Something of this character had Randal heard of the Baron, and he now gazed, first at his card, and then at him, with—admiration.

"I met a friend of yours at Borrowell's the other day," resumed the Baron—"Young Hazeldean. Careful fellow—quite a man of the world."

As this was the last praise poor Frank deserved, Randal again smiled.

The Baron went on—"I hear, Mr Leslie, that you have much influence over this same Hazeldean. His affairs are in a sad state. I should be very happy to be of use to him, as a relation of my friend Egerton's; but he understands business so well that he despises my advice."

"I am sure you do him injustice."

"Injustice! I honour his caution. I say to every man, 'Don't come to me—I can get you money on much easier terms than any one else; and what's the result! You come so often that you ruin yourself; whereas a regular usurer without conscience frightens you. "Cent per cent," you say; "oh, I must pull in."' If you have influence over your friend, tell him to stick to his bill-brokers, and have nothing to do with Baron Levy."

Here the minister's bell rung, and Randal, looking through the window, saw Dr F. walking to his carriage, which had made way for Baron Levy's splendid cabriolet—a cabriolet in the most perfect taste—Baron's coronet on the dark-brown panels—horse black, with such action!—harness just relieved with plating. The servant now entered, and requested Randal to step in; and addressing the Baron, assured him that he would not be detained a minute.

"Leslie," said the minister, sealing a note, "take this back to Lord ——, and say that I shall be with him in an hour."

"No other message?—he seemed to expect one."

"I dare say he did. Well, my letter is official, my message is not; beg him to see Mr —— before we meet—he will understand—all rests upon that interview."

Egerton then, extending the letter, resumed gravely—"Of course, you will not mention to any one that Dr F. was with me: the health of public men is not to be suspected. Hum—were you in your own room or the ante-room?"

"The ante-room, sir."

Egerton's brow contracted slightly. "And Mr Levy was there, eh?"

"Yes—the Baron."

"Baron! true. Come to plague me about the Mexican loan, I suppose. I will keep you no longer."

Randal, much meditating, left the house, and re-entered his hack cab. The Baron was admitted to the statesman's presence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Egerton had thrown himself at full length on the sofa, a position exceedingly rare with him; and about his whole air and manner, as Levy entered, there was something singularly different from that stateliness of port common to the austere legislator. The very tone of his voice was different. It was as if the statesman—the man of business—had vanished; it was rather the man of fashion and the idler, who, nodding languidly to his visitor, said, "Levy, what money can I have for a year?"

"The estate will bear very little more. My dear fellow, that last election was the very devil. You cannot go on thus much longer."

"My dear fellow!" Baron Levy hailed Audley Egerton as "my dear fellow." And Audley Egerton, perhaps, saw nothing strange in the words, though his lip curled.

"I shall not want to go on thus much longer," answered Egerton, as the curl on his lip changed to a gloomy smile. "The estate must, meanwhile, bear £5000 more."

"A hard pull on it. You had really better sell."

"I cannot afford to sell at present. I cannot afford men to say, 'Audley Egerton is done up—his property is for sale.'"

"It is very sad when one thinks what a rich man you have been—and may be yet!"

"Be yet! How?"

Baron Levy glanced towards the thick mahogany doors—thick and impervious as should be the doors of statesmen. "Why, you know that, with three words from you, I could produce an effect upon the stocks of three nations, that might give us each a hundred thousand pounds. We would go shares."

"Levy," said Egerton coldly, though a deep blush overspread his face, "you are a scoundrel; that is your look-out. I interfere with no man's tastes and conscience. I don't intend to be a scoundrel myself. I have told you that long ago."

The usurer's brows darkened, but he dispelled the cloud with an easy laugh.

"Well," said he, "you are neither wise nor complimentary, but you shall have the money. But yet, would it not be better," added Levy, with emphasis, "to borrow it, without interest, of your friend L'Estrange?"

Egerton started as if stung.

"You mean to taunt me, sir!" he exclaimed, passionately. "I accept pecuniary favours from Lord L'Estrange! I!"

"Tut, my dear Egerton, I dare say my Lord would not think so ill now of that act in your life which—"

"Hold!" exclaimed Egerton, writhing. "Hold!"

He stopped, and paced the room, muttering in broken sentences, "To blush before this man! Chastisement, chastisement!"

Levy gazed on him with hard and sinister eyes. The minister turned abruptly.

"Look you, Levy," said he, with forced composure—"you hate me—why, I know not."

"Hate you! How have I shown hatred? Would you ever have lived in this palace, and ruled this country as one of the most influential of its ministers, but for my management—my whispers to the wealthy Miss Leslie? Come, but for me what would you have been—perhaps a beggar?"

"What shall I be now, if I live? And this fortune which my marriage brought to me—it has passed for the main part into your hands. Be patient, you will have it all ere long. But there is one man in the world who has loved me from a boy, and woe to you if ever he learn that he has the right to despise me!"

"Egerton, my good fellow," said Levy, with great composure, "you need not threaten me, for what interest can I possibly have in tale-telling to Lord L'Estrange? Again, dismiss from your mind the absurd thought that I hate you. True, you snub

me in private, you cut me in public, you refuse to come to my dinners, you'll not ask me to your own; still, there is no man I like better, nor would more willingly serve. When do you want the £5000?"

"Perhaps in one month, perhaps not for three or four. Let it be ready when required."

"Enough; depend on it. Have you any other commands?'

"None."

"I will take my leave, then. By the by, what do you suppose the Hazeldean rental is worth—net?"

"I don't know, nor care. You have no designs upon *that*, too?"

"Well, I like keeping up family connections. Mr Frank seems a liberal young gentleman."

Before Egerton could answer, the Baron had glided to the door, and, nodding pleasantly, vanished with that nod.

Egerton remained, standing on his solitary hearth. A drear, single man's room it was, from wall to wall, despite its fretted ceilings and official pomp of Bramah escritoires and red boxes. Drear and cheerless—no trace of woman's habitation—no vestige of intruding, happy children. There stood the austere man alone. And then with a deep sigh he muttered, "Thank heaven, not for long—it will not last long."

Repeating those words, he mechanically locked up his papers, and pressed his hand to his heart for an instant, as if a spasm had shot through it.

"So—I must shun all emotion!" said he, shaking his head gently.

In five minutes more, Audley Egerton was in the streets, his mien erect, and his step firm as ever.

"That man is made of bronze," said a leader of the Opposition to a friend as they rode past the minister. "What would I not give for his nerves!"

END OF VOL. II.

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